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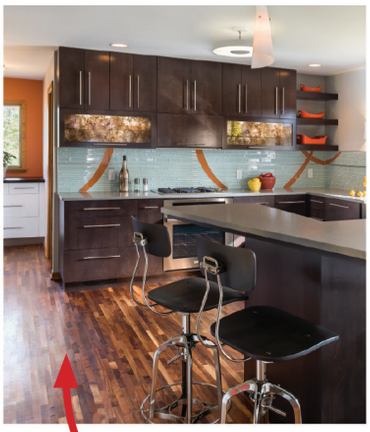
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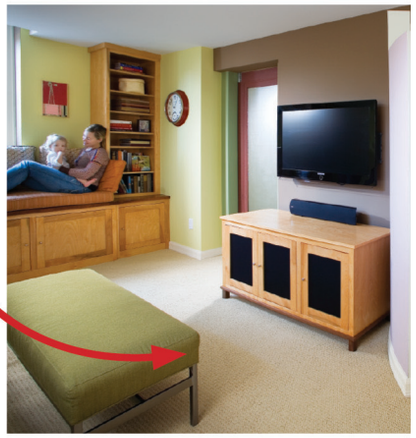
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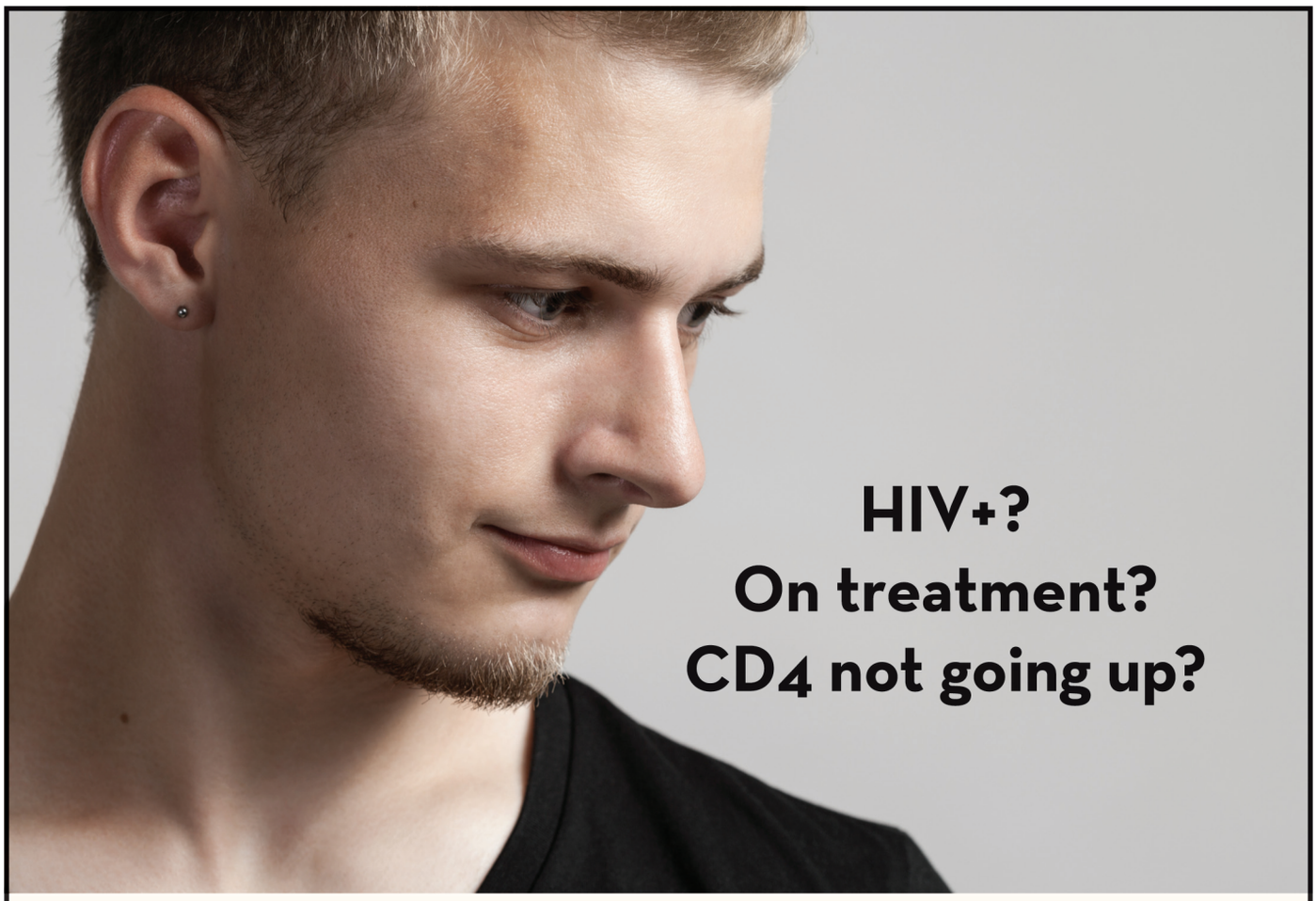


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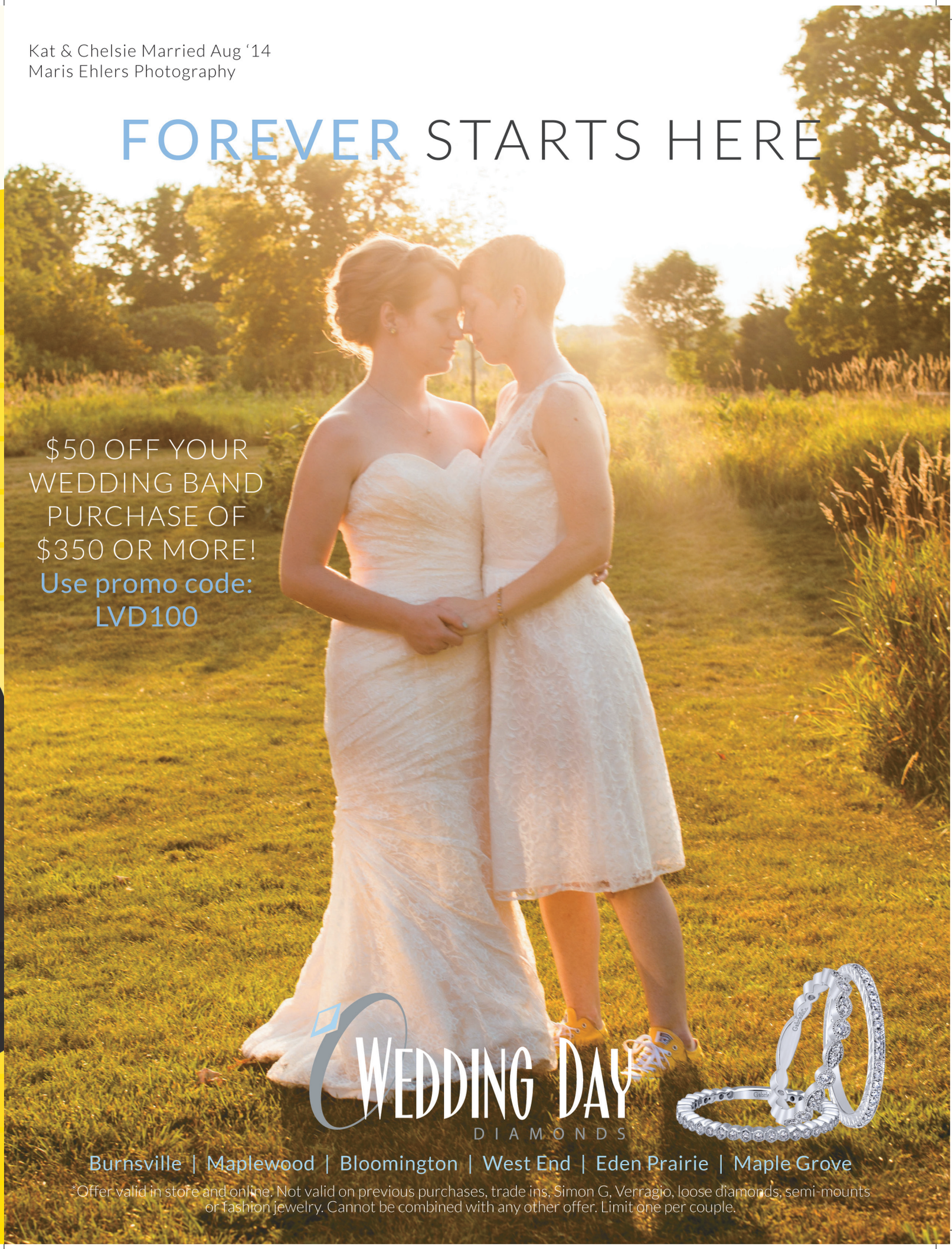
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NOVEMBER 13-26, 2014 | **ISSUE 508**

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Jaren Keaton

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FROM THE EDITOR | BY ANDY LIEN

The Economy of Education

I read something this morning that chilled me to the core. A legislator in our neighboring state to the east talked about goals for the state, including having the University focus more on research that can help the state's economy. That, I paraphrase, helping the state economy via research is more important than learning about ancient mating habits of whatever.

A couple sentences, a tremendous ripple effect.

It's not a new conversation, either, the idea that some things count more than others. What makes the distinctions, though, is what we value. If we value a singular goal over the actual mission of an institution or business or organization, we'll find this dissonance over and over. This one is particularly scary, particularly to me.

I was already planning to discuss higher education in this issue, considering that we've got a number of topical articles in it that point to the need for a greater expansion of how we look at gender and sexuality constructs and roles. In addition to our usual coverage of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and allied people and topics, Ellie Krug discusses the importance of Transgender Day of Remembrance in "Skirting the Issues" (p. 58) and Kye Allums tugs at my head and heart when describing how he is questioning his gender identity and is planning to go back to school for women and gender studies (p. 32).

You see, I pretty much *did* study the ancient mating habits of whatever. At Macalester College, I double-majored in Communications Studies and Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies. So, I majored in *talking about the ancient mating habits of whatever*. And I would do it again in a heartbeat. I was in the first group of majors ever at Macalester to come out with the new degree in Women & Gender Studies. Back in the day (1995-1999), we had a core of classes in the major but could then choose from all sorts of courses throughout the college that include women and gender in the area of study for the course, as well as a necessary requirement that everyone take a class that counted toward "domestic diversity." I can't sing its praises enough as a way of preparing me to view the larger world with a more inclusive lens, with or without my job as the editor of *Lavender*. Higher education isn't required for learning about all of these topics, but it is crucial for providing the fodder, whether data or stories or photos, for us to learn *more* as a culture.

Truth be told, I'm jealous of the people like Kye who get to study gender and sexuality at this time in our history. My Intro to Gay & Lesbian Studies course in 1996 was a wonderful taste of this area of study, but I can only imagine where the topics can go in gender and sexuality curricula today. And I pine for it.

Now, in a time when we have a day set aside to remember our killed transgender community members and also when suicide is all too often a solution to the problems in the rainbow community, we *need* to be researching the ancient habits of the GLBT community...and whatever. It's not just about the rights the community has yet to achieve, it's about survival. We *need* to maintain the factual foothold that this community's members existed long before they were vilified, as established by research. We *need* the professors in higher education to include gender identity and sexuality as a specific area of study, because it will always be deserving of it in our society, as indicated by the extreme learning curve out there specifically regarding the transgender community (and, to a great extent, the rest of the rainbow as well as women as a whole). If we *value* it as part of the mission of a liberal arts institution, we do not discard it or discount it as being lesser or in the periphery.

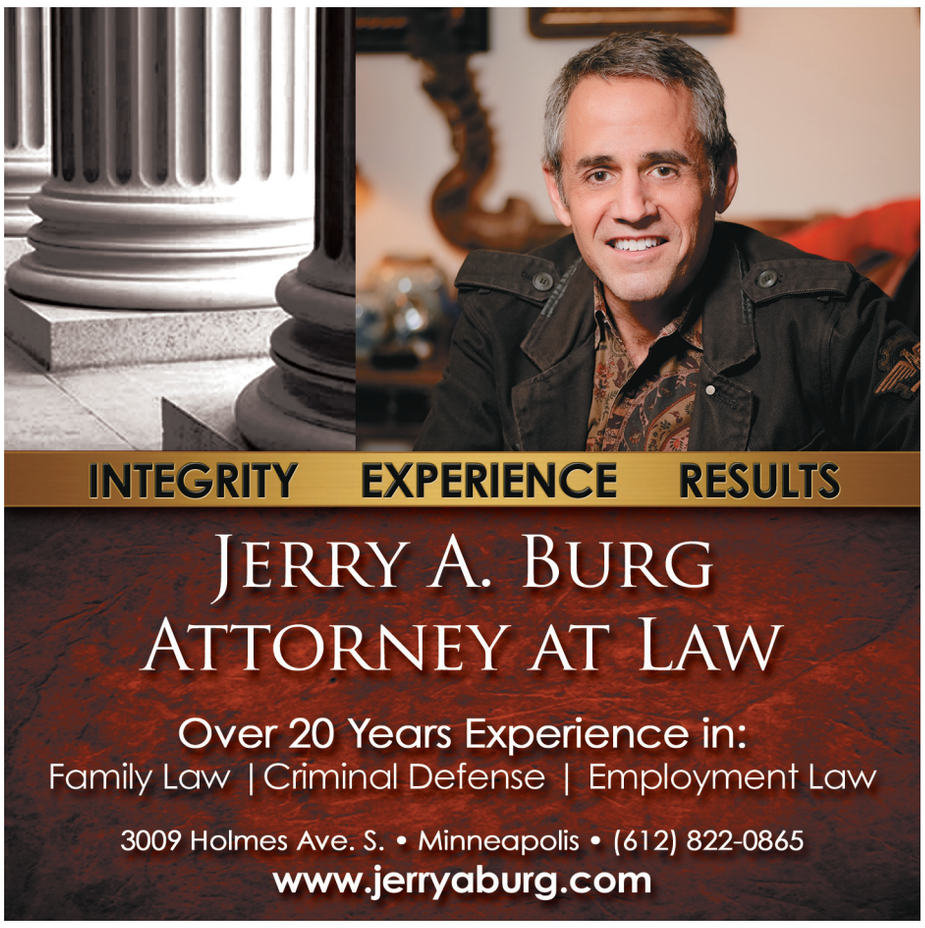
It's education, higher or not. When we know more, we understand more. When we understand more, we can empathize more. You can't put a price tag on this. It is priceless.

But if we lose it, we will bear the weight of the cost. ■



With you and with thanks,

Andy



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"Nothing To Fear But Fear Itself?"

Or, to quote FDR's 1933 first inaugural address precisely and in context, "…Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."

Consider also Fear's running mates: Hate, Bigotry, and Ignorance; they feed upon and amplify the whole. As they are doing in the current manifestations of Ebola, racism, homophobia—even the simple act of casting one's vote.

For example: the *Arizona Daily Independent* recently quoted one A.J. La Faro who observed early balloting in August, "behind bullet-proof glass because of the violence and protesting that occurred by militant groups during the November, 2012, General Election [sic]." What he saw that day, and what anyone can see from the video posted online, was a Latino male entering in with a number of sealed early votes to put into the ballot box.

La Faro stated, "I don't know if that person in the video is an illegal alien, a dreamer, or a citizen. What I do know is that he was a vulgar, disrespectful, violent thug who has no respect for our laws. I would have followed him to the parking lot to take down his tag number, but I feared for my life."

Was La Faro really terrified, or outraged that a person of color was helping others cast their legal ballots? Was he ignorant, manipulative, or truly in the grip of Roosevelt's "nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror?"

Those specters haunted FDR's world on the cusp of World War II and plague us today. Ebola is real. Ebola is terrifying. But it can only be transmitted in certain, specific ways, and can, as has been shown in example of Nigeria, that WHO (World Health Organization) has declared Ebola-free, be contained.

While shoring up our own medical defenses, reasoned fear—for Ebola *is* a killer—dictates that we must do all we can to stem the tide of disease in the African countries where it is still rampant.

Fear was programmed into humankind, it has kept us alive, while outright hysteria, or fear manipulated to inflame others, will be futile at best, or, potentially, lethal for all. ■





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OUTFRONT MINNESOTA'S 2014 GALA

November 22 • 6pm

International Market Square

Join OutFront Minnesota for an evening of music, dancing, and great food as they celebrate the progress we've made in advancing equity for all LGBTQ Minnesotans. Your emcee for the evening is Danger Boat Productions, the clever creators of The Theater of Public Policy. There will also be a performance by Minneapolis-based hip-hop artist, The Lioness, and then it's DJ Shannon Blowtorch taking over the evening. Tickets start at $100 per person. Visit www.outfrontmn.org for more info.

MIX: THANKSGIVING

November 26 • 6pm-12am

Bar Lurcat • 1624 Harmon Pl., Minneapolis

Give thanks with your chosen family at this annual pre-holiday happy hour featuring DJs Shiek and Lenka Paris. It's an evening of dancing, drinking and giving. This year, the chosen charity is Toys for Tots, and you're asked to bring a new, unwrapped toy. Donations are not required, but greatly appreciated. In particular, there's a need for toys, games or books suitable for tween and teen children, whose needs are often overlooked. As usual, they'll be offering happy hour drink pricing all evening, and there is no cover charge. Search "Mix: Thanksgiving" on Facebook for more info. ■

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THE DUCHESS OF MALFI

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Shakespeare wasn't the only exceptional English Renaissance playwright. John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* has some of the best lines ever written. Classical Actors Ensemble Artistic Director Joseph Papke points out that the macabre 1612 tragedy features "the prospect of marriage between partners of unequal status and the powerful social and political forces that can work against that."

Hannah Steblay plays the lead and observes that "*The Duchess of Malfi* was one of the first public displays of what we now think of as the 'ideal, modern woman.' She is an angel amongst a court of corrupt devils and her interactions with these other characters only strengthen the moral discrepancies between her and everyone else. She is powerful, confident, open-minded, assertive, alluring, and chooses to see the good in others, perhaps to a fault, and certainly to her demise."

THE FIRST MAN

Through Nov. 22
James J. Hill House, 240 Summit Ave., St. Paul
www.lexhamarts.org

Eugene O'Neill, lauded as the Father of American Drama, is given that title because he introduced serious themes into American plays a generation before Hellman, Williams, and Miller. One of his lesser-known early works, *The First Man,* has been compared to the work of August Strinberg of the generation before O'Neill. It deals with a woman who has subjugated herself to her husband's dream but then finds that she must separate herself from it.

Director Mary Cutler says that in his 1922 drama, O'Neill "is as rigorously analytical of relationships and marriages as he remained through his playwriting career. His characters are fraught by the dualities of intimacy, self-fulfillment, and sacrifice for the Other. *The First Man* demonstrates O'Neill's uncompromising drive to write of relationships and their complications that his contemporaries, and even we, would rather ignore."



The Duchess of Malfi. Photo by Zach Curtis



Ghost Sonata. Photo by Mathieu Lindquist

GHOST SONATA

Through Nov. 23
Nimbus Theatre
1517 Central Ave. NE, Mpls.
www.nimbustheatre.com

At Nimbus Theatre Danielle Blackbird's translation of August Strinberg's modernist chamber classic, *Ghost Sonata*, has been directed by Zach Morgan.

Nimbus's Co-Artistic Director Josh Cragun calls it "part naturalism, part expressionism, part realism. It deals with themes of desire and repression, with image vs. reality, with the damage that building facades around ourselves can cause. Through the eyes of The Student, a young man filled with optimism and gifted



Hauptmann. Photo by Justin Kirkeberg

filled with optimism and gifted with the ability to see things unseen to others, we embark on a journey that exposes the darkness behind the things that seem most pristine. In the end, we learn that nothing was ever what it seemed, and the people who seemed to have the most power were the ones most crippled by their dark pasts."

HAUPTMANN

Through Nov. 23
Peoples Center
425 20th Ave. S., Mpls.
www.candidtheatreco.com

A generation before Lee Harvey Oswald there was another controversial "bad guy" who remains controversial still: Richard "Bruno" Hauptmann. In the 1930s, the German immigrant was put to death for the kidnapping and murder of the baby son of legendary pilot Charles Lindbergh and wife Anne Morrow Lindbergh. Lindbergh himself is a national and Minnesota legend. His political sympathies often raise eyebrows.

At the root of the baby controversy was one of the most criticized and despised gay men ever: J. Edgar Hoover. We sometimes hear of a character who is part of a play, yet who is not actually written as a character into a play, and Hoover might be considered such in John Logan's bio-drama. Logan wrote of two other gay villains, Leopold and Loeb, in *Never the Sinner* which was produced by Candid Theater last year. This year they present *Hauptmann*.

Candid director Justin Kirkeberg observes that "Hoover, while not depicted in *Hauptmann,* plays a pivotal role in the events surrounding the trial and conviction of the man played by Aaron Henry. At a time when Hoover's power within the FBI was coming into question, he was able to leverage his considerable behind-the-scenes dealings to federalize the crime of kidnapping, thus inserting himself into the limelight of what was the highest profile crime of that time. Hoover then manufactured experts that became the foundation of Crime Scene Investigations." (A contemporary of Hoover, who is also considered one of the most negative gay men in history, was Ernst Rohm who led the Nazi SA.)

SEEDFOLKS

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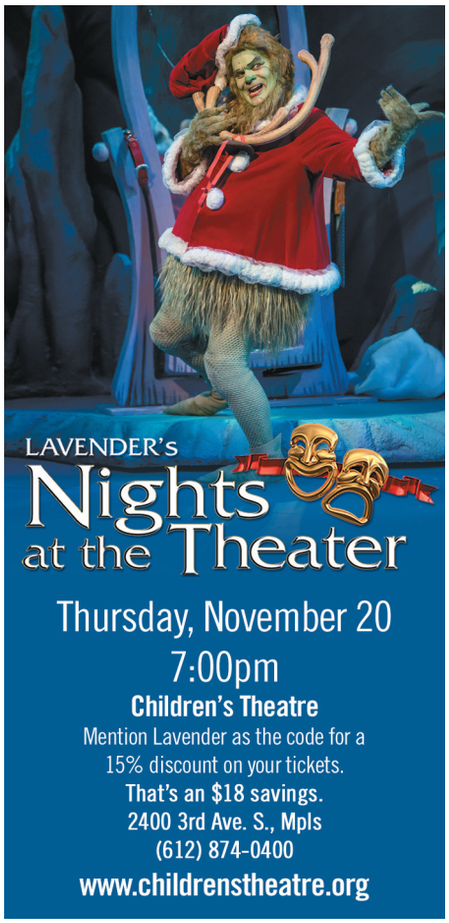
Sonja Parks's bedazzling solo performance in *Seedfolks* is a multi-character work that unfolds the story of a community garden that has a collectively positive effect on a depressed, run-down Cleveland neighborhood. Paul Fleischman's stage adaptation of his children's book begins with a Vietnamese person simply planting some seeds in an empty lot overrun with junk. It's as if the wrecked appearance of the area reflects the damaged emotions of the poor people who live there.

Parks plays the range of diverse ethnicities with versatile differentiated brilliance. At first, the story relates the disconnection between various neighbors. However, as they reconnect with the earth, they begin to find common ground, no pun intended. This doesn't settle their differences but it opens the doors of communication and resolution.

Seedfolks is also a superior example of technology and the human form being in perfect balance in performance. Jorge Cousineau's projections pan around the urban neighborhood with gliding grace and depth of perception. We see the ravaged beauty of old buildings and streets that may once have been impressive. Victor Zupanc's music nicely matches the overall effect.



Seedfolks. Photo by Dan Norman



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Fall Cocktails



(Clockwise from top left) Marvel Bar; Parlour Bar; Eat Street Social; Hola Arepa; Heyday; The Rabbit Hole.

The sophisticated drinker has more options for drinking about town with every restaurant opening. This year alone has included more openings than ever. Unfortunately, not every menu touting "craft" cocktails is worth the price of admission. Memorize this handy guide for the best ways to imbibe, whether out and about or at your own bar.

PERENNIAL FAVORITES:

Marvel Bar breaks the mold. Led by Pip Hanson, the cocktails are as intriguing as they are delicious. Whether mixing low-proof spirits with kombucha and fish sauce or steeping smoky scotch with a bit of nori for a taste of what it's like to kiss the sea, Marvel leads the creative drink boom in Minneapolis. They also make a stunning gin martini, if you'd rather stick to the classics.

Parlour Bar feels like a hipper Cheers from descending the stairs, to the easy, laid-back vibe. It's a room full of friends you haven't met yet. Best of all, the friends behind the bar mix up disarming takes on classic cocktails like no one else. The Parlour Old Fashioned is an Autumnal requirement. If you're looking for nerdy insights on the proper way to mix a boulevardier or prefer a simple sip of a couple of fingers of the great brown stuff, the staff is quick to accommodate. (And get the burger. Trust me on this.)

Eat Street Social was built by bartenders. Nick Kosevich and Ira

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24





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Koplowitz are part-owners of the restaurant, designed the bar, and also run Bittercube Bitters. Some nights you can even find Kosevich there, the man credited with many of the iconic drinks at Town Talk Diner. The prep time that these guys put into their cocktails includes a mile-long list of tinctures, bitters, syrups, and things I don't even know what to label them as. The results are like an adult soda fountain, everything they're pouring tastes of barely contained joy and a cheeky promise of bad behavior.

THE NEW KIDS:

Hola Arepa was a food truck that opened a restaurant and quickly stocked the bar with not just well-chosen bottles of booze, but some of the best bar talent in town. Co-owner Birk Grudem is a former barman who never lost the knack for mixing a tasty beverage. (The n/a lemonade alone is to die for.) Now the bar is managed by Dan Oskey, known for his work at The Strip Club and his co-owned flavor company featuring bitters, Easy & Oskey. Many of the cocktails are pre-batched and served in bottles, so the quick delivery on an order will make your head spin. So will these deliciously balanced, power-packed cocktails.

Heyday burst on the scene with astounding flavors for our former cover model, chef Jim Christensen. However, before that first pristine bite comes stunning drinks from Britt Tracy and crew behind the bar. The Bitter Lord with bourbon (the spirit of fall), house-made grenadine, and a hit of bright lemon is a long, slow sipper worth worshipping.

The Rabbit Hole has been open just over a year, but I'm continually intrigued by their cocktail program, not to mention forever seduced by the Not Doing Jack in the Morning. Chef and owner Thomas Kim has drank around the country with some of the boldest names in the booze business and brought that inspiration home. Plus, the ridiculous poutine and chili crab, pleasantly dim lights, and cool kid vibe makes this spot inside Midtown Global Market an ideal watering hole.

COMING SOON:

Spoon and Stable hasn't yet opened at the writing of this article, but Gavin Kaysen's restaurant has every tongue wagging from here to the Chrysler building. I'm most excited about the bar program, led by Robb Jones (who I love despite the insistence on that second "b"). His menu will strip down the basics of what a cocktail list can be and return to some classics, like a really good Cosmopolitan. He swears it can be a sophisticated sipper. Remember how much fun those used to be? Even though this restaurant is stacked to the hilt with world-class talent, it's safe to say that a seat at the bar will be fun in a way we haven't experienced in years. Now, we just have to jockey for a seat.

THE UNEXPECTED HITMAKERS:

Saffron is best known for the heady aromas accompanying the beautiful plates of food from co-owner and chef Sameh Wadi, but the drinks are also a draw enough to visit even if you aren't hungry. The program is now run by Nikola Govich, and early sips of his menu reveal a nuanced understanding of building liquid flavors in the confines of a simple glass. Less is more and more is even better on this list. Just get one of everything new. If you don't imbibe the booze, make sure to get an order of the utterly addictive, aromatic Turkish coffee.

Lyn 65 is an unassuming storefront in Richfield, but the bar program inside is one of the most pleasantly surprising and affordable to be found in the Twin Cities. The autumnal cocktail menu is a bewitching mix of sensations familiar to my favorite season: scents of burning leaves, deep spices layered upon each other, and crisp flavors. ■

(From left) Spoon and Stable; Saffron; Lyn 65





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TICKLE TORTURE
Spectrophilia

Local producer and artist Elliott Kozel arrives with a new EP, ready to bring some hot and funky sleaze for anyone willing to listen. Like another Minnesota-based, sex-obsessed, one-man band, Tickle Torture melds and molds different musical styles into a hot, synthesized freak of nature. Looking for proof, just spend three minutes with the overwhelming groove of "Fuck Me With the Lights On" (co-written by another local fav, Caroline Smith) or a few seconds less with the Ashley Dubose duet, "Ready for Love." Both not only have wax-melting grooves, but they revel in tunes that unfold over repeated listens. Packing a dance floor is a special gift; making those songs live just as well at home is genius. *Spectrophilia* is a great EP—can we get an album sooner than later?



BROODS
Evergreen

New Zealand has typically come in pretty low in the pop-music sweepstakes. There have been moments of great Kiwi pop (one of my favorite bands, The Chills, hail from Hobbit land), but those have been rare. Maybe it's time to reassess. On the heels of Lorde comes Broods, a synth-minded sibling duo who made this beguiling debut. The pair, Georgia and Caleb Nott, explore the dreamier side of electronic music, producing a set of breathless songs that still have some punch. Several earlier singles give the album some structure, but it is the balance of the album that gives it some memorable heft, from "Killing You" to "Medicine" (with younger sister Olivia helping out) to the finale "Superstar."



BARBRA STREISAND
Partners

The "duets" album is a time-tested music industry staple. Get an aging star, mix her (or him, like Santana) with some new blood and classic acts, and wait for the sales to roll in. Beyond the novelty of hearing Streisand share the mic with Babyface, John Legend, and Blake Shelton, *Partners* is largely a snooze-fest. Streisand's voice is still clear and rich. So much so that her partners often get in the way. It gets a bit better when standard bearers enter the fray, who have the classic voices to match vocal chords with our star. It's saying a lot that the highlight here is a duet with Billy Joel on "New York State of Mind." I never thought I would call Billy Joel the highlight of anything.



U2
Songs of Innocence

We all (well, anyone with an iTunes account at least) own U2's latest album. It's an interesting approach that I'm sure marketers and the like will long discuss. For music fans, there isn't much to write home about here. Whatever heart the boys once had almost completely dissipated. The first musically arresting moment comes two-thirds of the way through the album, as the Edge pulls out a classic, angular riff at the top of "Cedarwood Road." That gets damped down rather quickly as a pedestrian tune follows the promising groove. Lyrically, the awkward, over-reaching and clunky Bono dominates, reaching its nadir on the teen-poetry-reject "This is Where You Can Reach Me Now." Apple now allows you to remove the "gift" from your account. That's worth doing. ■


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TRAVEL | BY CARLA WALDEMAR





(From left) **Sari seller; Towering ancient temple facade; Grand gateway to a maharaja's palace.** Photos by Carla Waldemar

Incredible India

"Incredible India"—that's what the promos promise: an understatement if there ever was one. The land is an incessant carnival of sights, sounds, smells and color—especially color: every moment an over-the-top immersion in an action game. They call it "organized chaos." I call it "spectacular."

Traffic becomes an extreme sport involving trucks, buses, autos, rickshaws, tuk-tuks, motorcycles, and yes, cows, all of which follow uniquely personal driving rules, in which the only constant is a cacophony of honking horns. The climate observes three seasons: monsoon, hot, and hotter. Personal space shrinks to zero among its billion-plus residents, who reside everywhere from maharajas' palaces to garbage dumps.

I'd explored Northern India on past visits; this time, the less-traveled south (we were often the only Westerners), from the east coast's Bay of Bengal to the western Arabian Sea. Two separate Indias, insists our guide: the food is different (more seafood), as are the languages and colors—saris in tamer hues, but houses in psychedelic tones of Pepto pink, hazard orange, and phosphorescent green. The people are friendlier, eager for photos, beckoning us into their homes.

I'd purchased a two-week, 15-person tour offered by Overseas Adventure Travel (www.oattravel.com). It's that blessed "promise less, deliver more" experience where we explore UNESCO-cited temples and palaces, nose through street markets, and cool off in hotel pools. But what's not in the brochure is what thrilled us most: the spontaneous ("Driver, stop!") happenings our excellent tour guide, Sudha, provided.

First stop, Chennai (former Madras). The promised attractions: a waterfront, where no one swims but families swarm for promenades and couples for snogging, and the grand fort left by the Brits. The bonuses: visiting a temple of Animism, where we watch the devout shave heads to offer hair to the gods and light cigars to deter bad spirits. A rickety train ride across town to a locals-only café for lunch of dosa and sambals. The blessing of our bus by a priest who burns camphor in a coconut shell to insure a safe journey.

We drive past rice paddies teeming with squatting women. In a small town, school kids in uniform wait for their bus. We hop out of ours to visit with a woman from the untouchable caste as she searches for castoffs to sell. Then we hop into the back of a pickup truck to tour its streets, intensely decorated for a festival, as people wave and grin for photos, including the family of four posing on their tiny cycle. We stop at a Muslim butcher, cleaving beef (rare in this cow-loving Hindu country) on our route to Manchipuram, a city of 1,500 temples. We visit the magnificent eighth-century temple of Shiva and his bull (aka his Mercedes) with sensuous carvings crowding every pillar. We meet a wedding party, then a priest dressing Shiva's statue, while pilgrims sleep on the stones after a long journey.

Then Mahabapuram, a "small" town (no town is small in this country), where our Radisson Blu is right on the main drag. Attractions: a historic cache of amazing, large-scale sculptures, including Five Rathas—temples—each carved from a single, solid rock, along with life-sized stone elephant and lion, all from 620 A.D.; a huge, sculpted bas-relief of gods and animals, depicting scenes from legends like an action comic; and the Shore Temple, reaching into the bay, guarded by platoons of stone elephants.

Bonuses: a 6:00 a.m. stroll through town as it comes alive with women sweeping stoops, then drawing intricate chalk mandalas at the doorsteps. A family at breakfast waves and the cleaning crew, blowing whistles, scoops up trash ("He who litters opens evil's door" proclaims a sign). Cows reach into food vendors' displays to munch. A goatherd drives his flock through the melee. On the road, we pass a cremation ceremony, then pull off at a squatters' village of untouchables as they cook dinner over an open fire. Their neighbors, of a more elevated caste, cross the road—for the first time ever—to see why we've chosen to stop at the "lowly" part of town: a message that these folks are worthy people, too.

Oceanside Pondicherry, next up, served as headquarters for French colonists since 1673—thus, wide, flower-lined streets and police in pill-box hats to greet our visit to an ashram. But the native side of town is far more intriguing, as we discovered via a white-knuckle tuk-tuk ride, rampaging through narrow lanes where clots of teenage boys sprout grins and wildly wave. (Their too-cool-for-school American counterparts would studiously ignore strangers.) Bonus stops: a sprawling food market (saris, bangles, and handbags too) and an outdoor bar crammed with laborers swigging whiskey from the adjacent liquor store.

It's here in Pondi the political disturbances set in. Following a popular official's jail sentence for corruption, the pros and antis stage demonstrations, tossing rocks, overturning cars. Cafes, shops, and schools are shuttered, as well as trains and buses (and our route out of town).

Creative routing got us on our way to Tanjore, with the now-customary, "Driver, stop!" from Sudha when he spotted a village festival getting underway. We drop-in guests were greeted with necklaces of marigolds and eager hands pulling us into the raucous dance fuelled by horns and drums as the idol's float was being readied for parading. Sure bet you're not in Kansas, Dorothy!

In town, the starred attractions: the maharaja's palace museum, lush with a world-class collection of bronze sculptures of Shiva dancing on the back of a demon. Then, the massive, granite temple with its looming stair-stepped roof, carved with an intricate story line and guarded by Shiva's larger-than-lifesize bull. The bonuses, this time, involved kids—first a visit to an orphanage to play games with the brood, then, back at our hotel, a dance performance by two graceful 11-year-old lasses in lavish costume, who taught us the dozens of hand positions and eye moves that help tell the story. And, just because we passed by and cajoled Sudha, an evening at an Indian circus—elephant, camel, acrobats, fire eaters, jugglers, clowns—that was over the top under the big top.

In Madurai we head for the palace's sound and light show and the vast temple, encountering a procession of priests with drums, horns, and idols. Then the bazaar! It's a grand melee of tchotchke sellers—bangles, incense, pashminas—and platoons of men pedaling sewing machines to produce silk shirts made to your measure in half a day. The Gandhi Museum displays the saintly man's eyeglasses and sandals as it unfolds the story of the repressive British occupation he struggled against.

But, as usual, the bonuses proved even more enthralling. A stop at a mere path from the road led to a hidden Animistic shrine for a 400-year-old tree locals worshiped, reached through an avenue of near-lifesize clay horses donated by the pious. In town, a tuk-tuk ride—half amusement park, half kamizake—evoked more waves, more grins. Then a stop at an almond-milk stand to treat our drivers. A view of the river where women laundered and bathed. A rickshaw ride through more back alleys by outcaste peddlers Sudha purposely hired to help them gain status. Dinner in a dive where he bought vodka, Sprite, and limes and produced cocktails for our group.

This morning, a monkey is peering in my window. Soon his brothers are joining him, one clutching a bathing suit purloined from a neighboring porch. I grab a weapon—well, a rolled-up magazine—in order to clear the path to breakfast at our resort near a nature preserve. The adjoining town sprouts so much traffic—and for the first time, other tourists—that I'm glad to be on our way.

Soon we're bumping along a dirt track to a tiny village—pop. 2,500 with five castes—where locals clamor to affix bindis on our foreheads and kids vie to guide us, eager to practice their English. (Me: "What's that?" Girl: "Dog baby.")

The terrain changes from flat, red clay to forested mountains, then fades to the balmy backwaters that circle Cochin—canals constructed by the Dutch who traded here in the 1600s, along with Portuguese, Arabs, Chinese, and Jews. Temples make way for churches, including one that once held the bones of explorer Vasco da Gama. Signs advertise Jesus Auto Works and Madonna General Store.

Cochin's harbor is laced with mammoth nets employed, still today, by Chinese fishermen, who let us try our hand at roping their catch. We pop in on an open-air laundry as sweating workers labor over sheets and towels, spread on the sand to dry. In melting-pot Cochin, the Dutch Palace (designed for a maharaja to displays his treasures) stands next to a synagogue, erected in 1568 by Jews fleeing the Spanish Inquisition. It's the center of Jew Town, where all but a handful fled in 1947, fearing trouble after the country's tempestuous partition.

That night, we snag tickets to Cochin's famed dance performance, with an up-close preview of dancers—all male—applying makeup: green face, out-of-bounds eyeliner, uber-red lips. They later appear onstage in gowns and headdress Pride Paraders would envy to portray classic myths.

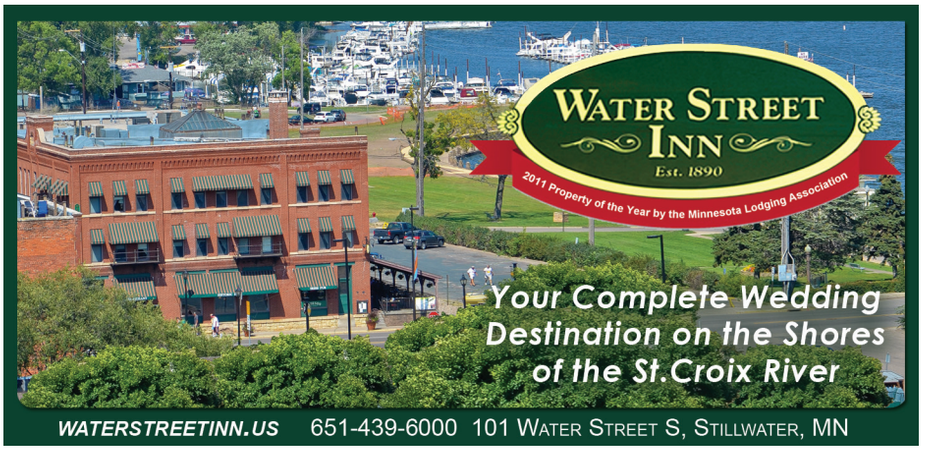
We take to the air to reach our final destination, Mysore, a mini-London by design: clock tower, "Trafalger Square," palace a la Buckingham. That ornate maharajah's palace, built in 1910, boasts 400 rooms, each more fancy than the last. We had lunch in another of his palaces, then bedded down in a third, now a hotel.

Perhaps the finest temple of all lies out of town: star-shaped, intricately carved outside with band after band of figures—elephants, wrestlers, sexual athletes, mythical birds, more, more, more—and inside, splendid Vishnu greets us. More bonus surprises: Sudha convinces a bullock cart to give us a quick ride, then leads us to a cottage where mulberry-munching silkworms spin their cocoons. We wander through Cochin's teeming spice market, then—surprise again—board vintage Ambassador autos for our return.

Speaking of return? Can't wait. India's got me hooked. ■







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Q&A with Kye Allums

While the Minnesota State High School League has been making the news preparing to vote on a policy for transgender students who wish to play sports, one of the nation's pioneer transgender athletes has returned to his home state. Kye Allums was the first openly transgender NCAA Division I athlete, playing basketball for George Washington University in Washington, D.C. in 2010. A native Minnesotan and former Miss Basketball Minnesota candidate, Kye attended both Highland Park and Centennial High School prior to college. Kye has recently been listed by *TIME Magazine* as one of 21 Transgender People Who Influenced American Culture, and can now been seen in Laverne Cox's [*Orange is The New Black*] MTV documentary, *The T Word*. Kye is the founder of Project I Am Enough. He took a moment to speak with *Lavender* about his experiences, and his thoughts on the MSHL's upcoming vote.

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IT'S A DAY-TO-DAY STRUGGLE TO CONTINUE REMINDING MYSELF THAT I AM ENOUGH FOR ME, AND THAT THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH WHO I AM.

Tell us about the experience of playing as an openly transgender athlete at George Washington University. Did you feel any additional pressure being open about who you were?
Kye Allums: The only thing that changed for me when I came out as transgender was people staring and pointing whenever I would walk on the court. For the most part, people treated me just like they had been prior to my coming out. Like a basketball player. Some schools would offer me a separate space to change and shower during away games. That was nice. I felt equipped to handle any scrutiny because of the support I had from my teammates, coaches, and close friends.

You've just been featured in Laverne Cox's documentary, *The T Word*. How did she approach you to participate in that project?
KA: Producers reached out to me a year or so ago, to see if I was interested in being a part of a documentary they were working on. I wasn't sure, so I took some time to think about it. They reached back out earlier this year, and told me that Laverne was going to be one of the Executive Producers. Once I heard that, I felt more comfortable being part of the project, as I knew she would make sure that our stories were told in a respectful way.

Tell me a bit about your experience filming. What was it like working with Laverne?
KA: We filmed over the course of a few days. It went by very quickly. I've known Laverne for about three years now. She is an amazing person, who I have so much love and respect for. Working with her was everything! I never thought I would see a day where Laverne and my mom would have a conversation about gender and pronouns. It was an unforgettable experience.

What was your motivation for founding Project I Am Enough?
KA: I started Project I Am Enough to create a space where LGBTQ people could come to share their I Am Enough stories. Being comfortable in my own skin is not an easy thing. It's a day-to-day struggle to continue reminding myself that I am enough for me, and that there is nothing wrong with who I am. It's easy for me to tell others that they are enough, but when it comes to myself, that's another story. It's a work in progress though, and I realize that, which is why I have come home, and will now be dedicating a lot of my time to strengthening my enoughness. I want to go back to school next year to pursue a degree in women and gender studies. I am applying to a few graduate programs in Minnesota. I don't know yet what career I want to pursue. My focus right now is just getting into graduate school and starting there. I am taking time to get to know myself outside of activism by spending time with close friends, family, exploring Minnesota and what it has to offer.

What is your life like now?
KA: There are things I'm working on with my identity: gender, sexuality. Right now, I am questioning my gender identity…but I am leaning more toward Genderqueer. That identity is growing on me. To me that means being exactly who I am without placing limits on who I can and cannot be. Genderqueer gives me the freedom to be as fluid as I want to be. I'm also figuring out what it means to be the right kind of activist/advocate.

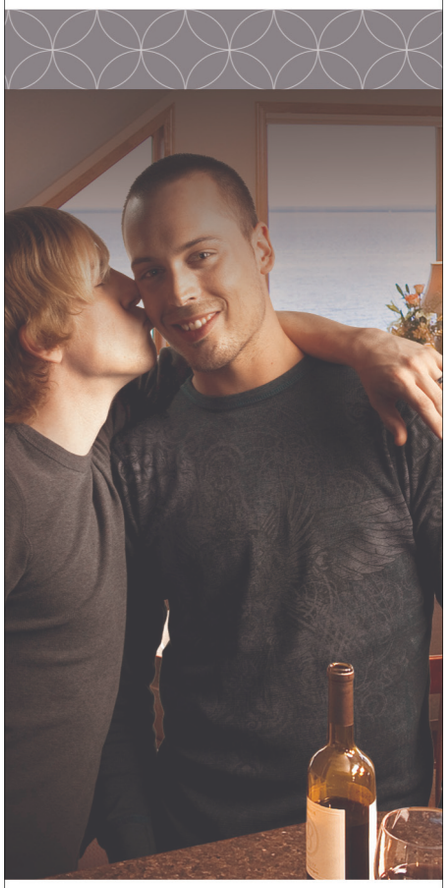
Can you explain?
KA: I put a lot of pressure on myself to do everything and help everyone before I help myself. I jumped straight into this work before taking time to really get to know myself. So I have decided to take a break, to figure out what being an activist looks like for me.

You might have heard that here in Minnesota, the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) is voting on a transgender athlete policy. There has been controversy, of course, and The Minnesota Child Protection League (MCPL) paid for a full-page ad in the *Star Tribune* that said: "A male wants to shower beside your 14-year-old daughter. Are YOU ok with that?" They've decided to delay voting on this policy, which is still only a recommendation for school districts, until December. Some are worried it doesn't offer transgender athletes enough protection, such as specifying appropriate dressing rooms. What are your thoughts?
KA: I was very disappointed to see that ad ran in the *Star Tribune*, but seeing that there was immediate backlash from outraged subscribers made me feel good, and supported, that many people were not okay with that anti-trans ad. I hope that the pending trans student policy gets passed when they vote in December, as I believe that everyone should have a right to play on a team that coincides with their gender identity.

When I came out as trans*, my college offered me an additional space to change in the event that being in the women's locker room made me uncomfortable. I was happy that they provided me with an additional option, but I was perfectly fine changing with my team. Being openly trans* didn't affect how I felt about using a locker room. I was more concerned with how my teammates felt, and they were all cool with me remaining in the locker room, as I had been using it for two years prior to coming out publicly. Every trans* athlete will not feel as comfortable as I did. I think that offering that additional space for trans*/gender nonconforming athletes to change is very important, and should be mandatory. ■

To see more of Kye in The T Word, *visit MTV.com. Hosted by Laverne Cox, this one-hour documentary takes viewers inside the lives of seven trans youth. Ranging in age from 12 to 24, with varying levels of parental and social support, the film explores each individual's journey as they try to overcome challenges including coming out, bullying, dating, and anti-transgender violence.*

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Fitness



GYM PROFILE

THE FIRM

When you walk through the bright, 12-foot floral planter-framed glass doors of The Firm on a hot summer night and make your way to the sprawling all-White Corian front desk longer than many a sailboat, you just know you are someplace special.

In fact, you'd be forgiven for thinking you'd just been transported from the edge of downtown Minneapolis to the lobby of a chic boutique hotel just off South Beach.

Which might also explain the man in the candy apple red speedo doing high kicks to Miami Sound Machine.

Nevertheless, you're nowhere near Miami. You're still in Minneapolis at The Firm A Workout Studio. A self-described "five boutique fitness collection," The Firm is unlike any other gym in the Twin Cities (and, likely, anywhere). Beyond its wide range of classes and oft-legendary instructors, and just underneath the bright lights and neon short shorts, you will find at The Firm a community. A deep reservoir of friendship and joy that is now almost 30 years in the making.

Oh, and the guy in the speedo? That's Doug Melroe. He'll be teaching your step aerobics class tonight.

A successful Firm was not a foregone conclusion in the mid-1980s when Kelly Miyamoto teamed up with two friends to open an aerobics studio in downtown Minneapolis. The trio triumphed over just about every last challenge you could throw at a small business trying to get off the ground. At one point, the entire gym was forced to operate out of the Polish Community Center. Luckily, the spirit of its owners and clients alike has always been larger than any physical space it called home.

That is, until its latest incarnation. Today, Kelly and Neil Miyamoto's Firm finally has a permanent space capable of carrying out its ambitious mission to "make working out an event." Set back from Glenwood Avenue along a stretch of downtown Minneapolis recently waking from its post-industrial warehouse slumber, the relatively new location is a beautiful oasis for its growing clientele.

Most gyms are a means to an end; sterile, impersonal places. You walk in, work out, and leave. The Firm's communal layout, however, encourages clients to interact and socialize. It's not the least bit unusual to see friends grabbing a shake after a workout, catching up on the couches or in open areas.

Beyond its aesthetic charm, this once aerobics-only outfit has broadened its offerings and amenities to rival many of the larger corporate gyms around town. In addition to studio space for a variety of group aerobics and dance classes, The Firm is also home to a complete CrossFit box, stadium-seating cycle studio, heated yoga room, personal training space, and full open exercise area and weight room. If there's a fitness trend worth paying attention to, there's probably a class for it at The Firm. Or there













will be soon.

And you can guarantee that, unlike many of its cookie cutter corporate competitors, the instructors teaching the class will be among the best and most unique in the business. Kelly and Neil have worked hard over the last couple decades to attract talented, one-of-a-kind instructors across a wide range of fitness disciplines. And it shows. Many have achieved relative rockstar status, complete with a dedicated fan following as well as recognition from the fitness community at large.

And not just the fitness community either. The Firm has been a strong part of and ally to the GLBT community in the Twin Cities since its founding. Proud supporters of the Minnesota AIDS Walk, the MN Red Ribbon Ride, and Twin Cities Pride for decades, The Firm truly has lived up to its mission of being a welcoming space for all people. Including men in short shorts.

On paper and in person, it's easy to see why, despite its humble beginnings, the Firm in 2014 is a thriving, successful workout community.

And a community it is. Beyond any one amenity or popular instructor, the real secret to The Firm's success is undoubtedly its clientele. There is nothing quite like a member of the Firm. These people love working out. A lot. Some would call them mildly obsessed. And, frankly, they would be right.

Whether the burn of a great workout or simply the joy of having fun with friends after a hectic workday, Firm members often become evangelists for their gym. If you have a friend who goes to The Firm, you have been or soon will be invited to join them for a workout. That is exactly what happened to me in 2007. A friend joined and suggested I take advantage of The Firm's free week for new members. A few workouts in and I was hooked.

For me, the Firm is also an extension of my family. Quite literally. In 2009, I met my partner in the back row of a step aerobics class. Our mutual love of The Firm led to our mutual love of each other; a surprisingly not-all-too-uncommon experience. I know of more than a couple couples who high-kicked their way to lasting love at The Firm.

And that's the magic of The Firm. You walk in thinking you're going to get a great workout. And you will. But you'll get so much more than that, too: fun, friendship, visible abs, maybe even a special someone.

There's no shortage of gyms in this town. If you're looking for someplace to run on a treadmill at midnight or sit in a steam room or hot tub for hours on end, you know where to go. If, however, you've been thinking about shaking things up or setting new goals and you want to have fun in the process, pop down to 1010 2nd Ave N. The smiling faces behind that big beautiful white desk will take great care of you. Including the guy in the candy apple red speedo doing high kicks to Miami Sound Machine. ■

Fitness



THE IDEAL HOME GYM

Don't you love driving to your local gym in the winter to drudge through the slushy parking lot, realize you forgot your shoes, then find the piece of equipment you want to work on is taken? One remedy to avoid all of this is having a home gym. A home gym requires no fees, allows you to have your favorite music on, and can be used 24 hours a day. This is how you set it up.

Location Matters: How to find the ideal place for your home gym

As I walked into my cousin's apartment, his weight bench, racks, barbell, and weights were in the middle of the living room…permanently. It may have been the most uncomfortable recliner I've ever used, but it forced him to work out while watching TV and was motivating for him.

While I don't necessarily recommend you place your home gym in the middle of your living room, it should be in a place to encourage you to work out. This could be a spare bedroom, in the basement, den, or even in a corner of a room. For those who use their garage, it's critical to dress in three or four layers to make sure you are warmed up.

If you use a cardio machine (and it's not necessary to have one in your home gym), you should place it in front of a TV or a tablet. Unless you already look awesome in front of a mirror and love staring at yourself in one, you'll likely get bored without some entertainment to watch. Try to do at least 30-60 minutes on your cardio machine while watching your favorite show or movie.

What should I do at home?

To get truly ripped and strong, and to do it with no injuries, usually will require some professional guidance. One option is to hire a local trainer. Look for solid credentials, a matching personality, and a clientele similar to yourself. Make sure they also give you an assessment and tell you why you're doing the exercises you're doing.

Don't just consider local

CONTINUED ON PAGE 40

ARE YOU A MAN WHO HAS HAIR LOSS?



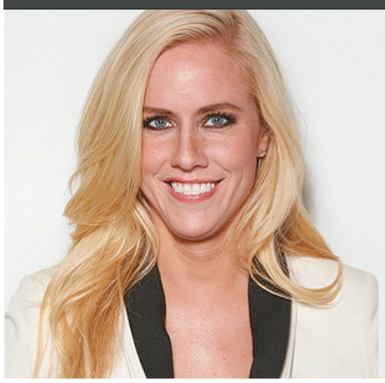
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BEST PLACES TO WORK 2014 for LGBT Equality 100% CORPORATE EQUALITY INDEX

coaches. Feel free to expand your search as there are many great fitness professionals online. My favorites are Mike Robertson, Dean Somerset, Kellie Davis, Mike Reinold, and Bret Contreras. While they are not cheap, their prices do reflect their value, and the amount you might pay in gym fees as well as a local trainer will make it worth it. I worked with Bret Contreras for a couple of years and found his programs, personality, and training philosophy to be a good fit for me, as well as fun and challenging.

If you don't have the budget to hire these coaches, at the very least, you should get a generic program from one of them. Their programs are geared toward getting their clients strong and keeping them injury-free. I've done programs from all of them and found their programs to be a great way to mix up my own training and break plateaus.

Two Essential and Cheap Tools for Your Warm Up

Six studies in the past two years have shown foam rolling to improve flexibility, recovery, and blood flow. (1-6) The bottom line is that if you take five minutes to roll as part of your warm up, it can keep the knees, spine, and shoulders feeling good. Keep your foam rolling simple though. Key areas to include in your warm up are: IT Band, quadriceps, adductors, lats, and pecs. A quick YouTube search can show you how to roll them.

A jump rope is one of my favorite tools to quickly warm up your upper and lower body. Try jumping for two minutes at first and you'll be pleasantly surprised how demanding they can be. Don't be discouraged if you look like you're high on LSD trying to run through the *American Gladiator* gauntlet. Keep practicing and you'll naturally get better each time you do it.

What is free and one of the most powerful ways to get lean?

My favorite tool to get strong and shredded is actually free and will provide decades of challenge. I'm talking about your own bodyweight. Bodyweight exercises like side planks, dead bugs, push-ups, and chin-ups give you the proper coordination and strength for using more advanced equipment. This equipment, which is fairly cheap, can help make bodyweight exercises even more challenging.

One of these tools is the ab wheel which is a sure-fire way to get the six-pack flaring. I also appreciate the ab wheel because it will work your obliques and hit the lower abdominals creating a six-pack which is more three-dimensional rather than just flat. You should make sure you can do a plank for at least one minute and 30 seconds before you use an ab wheel, but once you can, you are ready.

Another tool that complements body weight exercises quite well is bands. Doing a lot of push-ups or bench pressing is great for developing a strong chest and shoulders, but can also result in a forward shoulder posture. Bands allow you to prevent this by working the mid back muscles through exercises like horizontal rows, overhead rows, and face pulls. My favorite bands are Spri bands which you can get from Amazon.com.

Another one of my favorite tools is the Iron Gym Workout Bar (which can you get at Target for 30 bucks). The Iron Gym allows you to do chin-ups and pull-ups which will create a strong and wide back. These pulling movements also balance out the pressing movements of push-ups. If you can't do a chin-up or pull-up yet, don't worry, you can use the Elite Fitness Bands to give you some assistance. My favorite progression is to start with a thick orange band and four thin orange bands. Every week, you can eliminate one of the small bands you are using and progress to using fewer and fewer bands. Eventually, you'll be able to do a chin-up without band assistance.

At some point, you'll need this.

The upper body can get very strong without a barbell, especially with bodyweight exercises. The lower body cannot. This doesn't mean you can't build some solid leg strength with single leg exercises and plyometrics, but when it comes to pure strength, nothing matches the barbell for the lower body.

Using a barbell can allow you to build immense strength in the legs and glutes with exercises like deadlifts, power cleans, front squats, and BB loaded single leg exercises. Don't forget some weight though. You'll likely need anywhere from 100 to 300 extra pounds, but you can get this gradually. My favorite place to pick up this heavy stuff is on Craigslist, Play it Again Sports, or at Dick's Sporting Goods because the shipping cost is typically free for weights. Later, you can also think about getting a bench and racks for squatting or benching.

Eventually, you can get this stuff…

There are thousands of effective bodyweight exercises, but the best upper body exercises in my opinion come when you use gymnastics rings. Don't be intimidated by gymnastics rings, they can be used by anyone, from complete novices to the greatest athletes on the planet. I know what you're thinking: *How in the heck do I use gymnastics rings in my home*? It's fairly simple. Put up your gymnastics rings over your Iron Gym. I personally used a program from Gold Medal Bodies (http://gmb.io). Their program allowed me to do many ring exercises I never thought I could ever do and allowed me to progress at my own pace.

Conclusion

A home gym is one of the most convenient and enjoyable places to build the body of your dreams. To do that, you should work with a professional or use a professional program to ensure optimal progress and safety. Don't worry about getting the perfect home gym on day one. Give yourself time to add whatever equipment motivates you. However, mastering bodyweight exercises first will set the foundation for you to expand to bigger and badder equipment. ■

Von Gillette is an evidence-based fitness and nutrition professional specializing in weight loss in the Twin Cities. www.vongillette.com

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LEATHER LIFE | BY STEVE LENIUS

A Visit to a Leather Club Meeting

Leather clubs help make community happen.

Leather clubs are among the oldest institutions in today's leather community. Some have been in existence for more than fifty years. Leather clubs originally were formed as a family of choice, providing camaraderie and brotherhood for gay men who might have been alienated from their family of origin.

Leather clubs still provide camaraderie and a sense of chosen family, but today they also have a strong ethic of building, maintaining, and serving their community. Building community takes time, work, and commitment. Leather clubs and their members are among the leather community's leaders because they commit the time and do the work necessary to make community happen.

For decades the Atons of Minneapolis, the Upper Midwest's longest-running leather club (over 40 years and counting), has presented leather-community events throughout the year. The club has a combined social and business meeting every month, and the public is welcome to attend the open portion of these meetings. Come along with your humble columnist as we visit the club's recent meeting on Sunday, October 12. (This particular meeting turned out to be noteworthy—and unusual—because during the meeting the club gained three new full members.)

A meeting of the Atons is similar in some ways to the meetings of many other community groups. It is conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order and includes an agenda with old and new business, officer and committee reports, motions, seconds, discussion, and voting. Yet, despite these similarities, the Atons, like every community group, puts the unique stamp of the club's and its members' personalities in its meetings.

The meeting was held in the home of one of the club's members. An afternoon social time preceded the evening meeting. Two kinds of lasagna were served, along with fried chicken, and there was General Jackson pie for dessert.

The open portion of the meeting was called to order at the appointed time. In attendance at the start of the meeting were two full members (both of them club officers), three honorary full members, two associate members, two guests, and one pledge (provisional club member). Another full member, who is also an officer, was out of town but used Skype to virtually attend the meeting. Two more club officers arrived shortly after the meeting began.

The agenda was lengthy, yet the meeting moved along briskly and finished ahead of schedule. The meeting started with reports from the president, the vice-president, the secretary, the treasurer, and various committees.

The membership committee chair reported that two of the club's honorary full members wished to become voting members. (Honorary full members can be present during the closed portion of the meeting but cannot vote.) After a brief discussion the club approved these changes in membership status and thus welcomed two new full members.

The pledge committee chair reported that the pledge had completed requirements for full membership and that his application for membership would be voted on during the closed portion of the meeting.

Next was discussion of several upcoming events the club will be presenting: the annual holiday fundraiser; the officer installation banquet next January; another fundraising event next spring; next summer's informal campout; and the club's next run (camping weekend) in the summer of 2016. In an attempt to avoid scheduling conflicts, events being planned by other local and regional leather clubs also were reviewed.

Another six or seven miscellaneous agenda items, including proposed bylaw and club uniform updates and items for a leather history display, were discussed. Then the associate members, visitors, and the pledge were excused, and the closed portion of the meeting began.

I am breaking no confidences when I report that during the closed portion of the meeting a motion to accept the pledge's application for full membership was voted on. The motion passed, and the club welcomed another new full member.

The closed portion of the meeting was followed by another open portion. Discussion concerned upcoming club and community events: the just-concluded Mr. Iowa Leather weekend and upcoming events including a charity fundraiser called Leather Families Feuding, the Kansas City Pioneers 40th-anniversary run, the Knights of Leather 30th anniversary banquet, and a banquet hosted by the Black Guard of Minneapolis. (This illustrates the importance many leather clubs place on cooperating with and supporting other clubs and their events.)

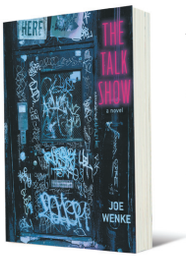
At least at this meeting, there was discussion but very little disagreement. Club members seemed to be in harmony on both the things they wanted to accomplish and the best ways to accomplish them. I also found it notable that Robert's Rules of Order didn't seem to get in the way, as they sometimes do, of getting things accomplished.

I left the meeting impressed both by the sheer number of items on the agenda and by the club's efficient and capable manner of addressing each item. The members of the Atons obviously enjoy the brotherhood they create as they work together on projects, and they enjoy seeing the way these projects build and strengthen their community. ■

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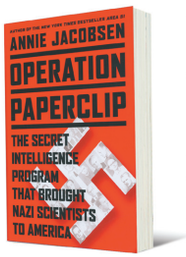
Author of the previously reviewed *You Got to be Kidding: A Radical Satire of the Bible* and *Papal Bull: An Ex Catholic Calls Out the Catholic Church*, Joe Wenke here offers up a chilling—albeit humorous—thriller. Jack Winthrop, award-winning *NYT* reporter, says "Yes," to controversial talk show host Abraham Lincoln Jones's offer to collaborate on his forthcoming, nationwide "Emancipation Tour," meeting his public face-to-face. Stalkers' bullets fly at the very opening; stalkers *plural* becoming evident to Winthrop from the get go. He finds himself stalked, involving his girlfriend Danielle, and his "family" at the Tit for Tat strip club, his home away from home. The tension builds, the pace increases until the climax, when Jones and Winthrop live—and learn—some life-altering lessons.

Damage Control: A Memoir of Outlandish Privilege, Loss and Redemption
Sergei Boissier
Argo Navis Author Services
$23.99



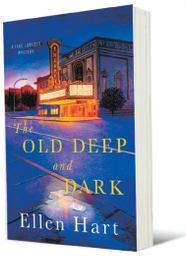
So many have mother issues; what could another memoir offer? When the author of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* hands Boissier accolades, you know he's hit the mother lode. Boissier writes this gripping history as a back-and-forth between the present, where he is a single, gay male psychotherapist in his forties on the eve of adopting an about-to-be-born infant, and the past, his childhood drenched in luxury and terror, the latter engendered particularly by his Cuban Medea-channeled mother, Dollsie. Also in the present, Dollise is dying of pancreatic cancer, and Boissier finally realizes that he and Dollsie must come to terms before her death, so that he may embark upon the seas of parenthood unburdened of a lifetime's rage and guilt.

Operation Paperclip: The Secret Intelligence Program that Brought Nazi Scientists to America
Annie Jacobsen
Little Brown
$30



A difficult dilemma facing the United States government following World War II was, in brief, what to do with the Nazi scientists. Some were accused of war crimes, some stood trial at Nuremberg. Their scientific researches, their weaponry and inventions, their gruesome human "medical" experiments, had cost the lives of tens of thousands of slave laborers and prisoners. Ignored, they would have fallen into the hands of the Soviets, now our Cold War enemy; to bring them openly to the States would have caused outrage. "Project Paperclip" was the secret program allowing more than a thousand of these men and women into our country. Jacobsen's extensive research, interviews, and access to newly declassified material make a harrowing history, and formulates questions still difficult to answer.

The Old Deep and Dark
Ellen Hart
Minotaur Books
$25.99



The latest in Hart's Jane Lawless series continues to thrill and entertain. Jane's best friend and co-conspirator, renowned theater director Cordelia Thorn, has, with her sister, Octavia, bought an old theater—dubbed "The Old Deep and Dark" after Prohibition-era double murders. Besides Octavia's noxious presence, Cordelia's restoration woes are complicated by the discovery of various corpses entombed in the theater walls. She calls Lawless, and Jane starts detecting, only to find, as often happens, that the past and present are intertwined. There's the usual cast of characters, Jane's current girlfriend, Avi, her ex, Julia, and Cordelia's niece—Octavia's daughter—Hattie. Cordelia, as ebullient as ever, is just slightly subdued and more nuanced, a splendid evolution. A wonderful, creepy tale for Minneapolis's mystery- and theater-smitten readers. ■





RIDE REVIEW | BY RANDY STERN | PHOTO BY RANDY STERN

Mercedes-Benz S-Class



This is the greatest car ever made.

You may argue otherwise, but consider how much this lofty title was earned by the Mercedes-Benz S-Class. It shifted the luxury market when luxury became too grandiose and out of scale. Instead of the fattest car becoming the fattest cat amongst the grand automobiles, there was scale to be considered. Things were scalable by quality, efficiency, and attaining the right size for a luxury car.

That was in 1972 when a new S-Class made its debut in North America. All of the sudden we embraced the Mercedes-Benz as the ultimate gift to the luxury car buyer. Namely, the S-Class was the car to get when you made it to the top.

Over four decades on, a new S-Class debuts. Granted, the flagship had its ups and downs when finding the right combination of excellence. Yet, no one would deny its place in the pantheon of luxury cars. This new model may have taken the S-Class to a new level.

The S-Class may have jumped into a new paradigm. One reserved for more bespoke brands. Perhaps it was time for such a quantum leap.

To frame the new S-Class, it would take a consolidation of the remnants of Maybach to meld into a design that requires certain elements to be the flagship of the line. The grille is more prominent than before, shaped as integral to the entire design. Headlamps that are bold, bright, and beautiful. A side profile that is sweeping with curves and subtle design surfaces. This leads to a rear end that integrates the best of what Daimler AG had to offer in over a century.

In short, the new S-Class is the most beautiful generation in its history. This will elicit arguments—my own offering up the 1970s for comparison. However, I will also put into consideration the most popular S-Class ever: the one from the 1980s. The new S-Class has an ambiance and presence that made that car an icon in the 1980s. Though forward thinking and looking, there is no denying the history the S-Class honors in its current form.

The model being driven here is the S63 AMG. AMGs usually arrive with aggressive details, including grille textures and performance bits. However, if you did not pay attention to the badges and the twenty-inch black alloy wheels, you might think it looks like any other S-Class. Well, yes, but that is what attracts us to the S-Class in the first place: the luxury and presence of the car regardless of what is under the hood.

The same thing could be said with one of the most advanced and bespoke interiors even created for a Mercedes-Benz. For North America, we get a long wheelbase that offers up a spacious cabin both front and back. If the space is not enough, settle into the sports contoured seats inside the AMG model. There are plenty of adjustments to work through from the door controls, as well as from the COMAND screen. Front occupants also get the option of several massage settings, including a hot stone treatment.

Rear passengers are treated to the same sports contoured seating, with a few differences. These seats have power adjustments available from each door, including a recline feature. There is a folding center armrest with storage and duel cup holders. You also get your own skylight and power-operated shades for the rear and door windows for the ultimate in privacy.

The instrument panel is a complete break from history. With two wide screens across the top, circular vents, and an IWC Schaffhausen analog timepiece, there is a mix of old and new amid the bespoke detailing around these features. The screens offer many options for set-up. The instrumentation screen in front of the driver provides excellent readouts for all vehicle functions, trip information, and a night vision screen in-between the speedometer and tachometer.

Toward the center of the car is the COMAND screen. From the large dial on the console, you have control of the audio system, navigation, Bluetooth-connected mobile devices, and other vehicle functions aside from the additional seat adjustments.

If there is one detail around the cabin that will blow you away, it would be the astounding detail from the Burmester audio system's speakers. On the A-pillars, speakers come out

when the audio system is played. There are also speakers in the headliner; just a part of a 13-speaker system emitting surround and 3-D sound. This is one the best audio setups in any automobile today.

Once you are settled into the S63, you are in for a surprise. Before you find out what is under the hood, drive it for a bit. It simply feels smooth, elegant and poised. What if you found out there is a hand-built, 5.5-liter twin-turbocharged V8 under that hood? The buttery-smooth AMG engine puts out 577 horsepower with 664 pound-feet of torque. Power is sent through a seven-speed multi-clutch gearbox (called AMG Speedshift) that includes an ECO setting, along with a Sport mode to make full use of those 577 horses. The final drive is through Mercedes-Benz's 4Matic all-wheel drive system. This is an unsurpassed driveline befitting a top shelf flagship sedan.

Though it is an AMG model, the ride and handling mix is nothing short of excellent. The ride is not too firm or soft, just absolutely perfect. You go through the curves flat—no lean or roll present. One could switch the suspension set-up from Comfort to Sport for a firmer driving experience. You will find the S63 as taut, lithe, and poised even at the firmer setting. One cannot ignore the lovely set of Continental Z-rated tires shod on twenty-inch black forged ten-spoke alloy wheels. They provide fine grip when you need it.

Being a big car, another huge surprise is the steering system. The best way to describe it would be perfect. The on-center feel is excellent, with the right amount of weight on the turns. Though the turning radius is a bit on the big side, the feel through these maneuvers is superb. Brakes are strong and do stop short for a car of its size. The brakes have an excellent feel and offer balanced stops in both normal and panic situations.

Though this is such a lovely car, there is one down side: fuel economy. The S63 averaged 17.0MPG, which was actually expected.

If you are exploring the S-Class, your starting point is the S550 with its 449-horsepower twin-turbocharged 4.7-liter V8. That starts off at $93,325. If the S63 AMG tickles your fancy, be prepared to spend a lot of money. The sticker on this S63 tester came out to $163,835. New for 2015 are a pair of V12 models: the S600 and the S65 AMG, the latter putting out 621 horsepower.

Greatness is the one word that pops up when the S63 was driven. It is the kind of greatness that attracts surprised eyes near and afar. The S-Class has always been a car that commanded attention, embodied presence, and offered the ultimate in functional elegance. As much as I deeply honor the history of this car, this new model is perhaps the greatest S-Class of them all.

To make this point further, you have to compare the advanced technology, design excellence, and astute presence of this S-Class with other flagship sedans. No matter the price point, high or low, the new S-Class achieved something some cars only recently achieved for their brightest moment: absolute excellence.

In making this conclusion, one thing happened while driving this car. One does not jump into this car and drive off. You have to respect it, to be gentle with it at first. Then, it gets used to you and vice versa. This is the magic of the Mercedes-Benz S-Class. It knows how much I cost, as I certainly do. Once you get through the nuances of COMAND and how gentle this 577-horsepower monster truly is, the S63 AMG becomes friendlier and more enjoyable to drive. I felt relaxed every time I got behind the wheel of it—only a few cars could say that in recent times.

With that said, I can say with utter confidence that this is currently the greatest car in the world. ■



BY SHANE LUECK

HOLIDAY DÉCOR TIPS FROM THE PROFESSIONALS

The holidays are upon us and, no matter which holiday you celebrate this season, the Twin Cities has a plethora of retailers with items for your decorating needs. Covering a wide base of heritages and holiday traditions, these retailers offer up their own wares as well as decorating tips for incorporating already-owned pieces with something new this season.



Photo by Hubert Bonnet

AMERICAN SWEDISH INSTITUTE

At the **American Swedish Institute**, the key to decorating is incorporating the old with the new. Laura Cederberg, ASI's Communications & Marketing Manager says, "The holiday season is the greatest time of the year to celebrate heritage while building new contemporary traditions with family and friends. Mix heirloom and modern pieces to celebrate where you've been and where you are going together." She suggest offsetting patterns with a clean, simple line for a sophisticated look.

When designing a table setting, Cederberg says to pick place settings and dishes that will enhance the presentation of a spectacular holiday meal. Be sure to check the height of the décor: make sure the design and tablescape encourages free-flowing conversation between guests around the table.

"Swedish and Nordic design is largely inspired by the true beauty of the environment," Cederberg says. Décor from this region of the world focuses on the natural: use wood, silver, and paper ornaments and pieces to bring the beauty of the outside into a warm holiday celebration.

American Swedish Institute
2600 Park Ave S, Minneapolis
www.asimn.org

Note:
Christmas by Design: ASI's Christmas Rooms celebrate the holiday traditions of the Nordic countries. This year's rooms are inspired by contemporary Nordic designers. A sixth room celebrates the influence of Scandinavian tradition on local Minnesota designers. On view at the American Swedish Institute November 15-January 11. All items pictured available at the American Swedish Institute's Jul Shop, open November 7 – January 11.



Photo by Mike Hnida

TEN THOUSAND VILLAGES

Natural textures are often found among fair trade, hand-made items. At **Ten Thousand Villages**, Minneapolis Store Manager Julie Cowsert recommends using these pieces both practically and for décor. She's recommended the one-of-a-kind baskets and woven pieces be used as a bread basket, to accent a table setting, or to place ornaments and mirrored balls in for decoration. It's about creativity, the bright colors can easily be made at home on a mantle, accent a bookcase, or as a pop of color on a windowsill.

"These pieces can very easily be blended into anybody's décor," Cowsert says. "We have all different colors." Indeed, from the rustic and earthy reds, greens, and blues to vibrant jewel tones, anyone could find something to complement existing pieces in the home. But what makes Ten Thousand Villages' pieces unique is just that: uniqueness. Hand-made means no one else will have the same piece—talk about a conversation starter! The pieces, coming from 34 developing countries, use materials that are very eco-friendly, made of either recycled or easily renewable resources.

"Everything is giving twice," Cowsert says. "You give a gift but you're also giving back to the artisans who created the pieces."

Ten Thousand Villages
Locations in Minneapolis, St. Paul, Mountain Lake, and various fairs.
Find a location at www.tenthousandvillages.com



Photo by Hubert Bonnet

SIMBA CRAFTWARE

Baskets often make their way into holiday décor in various ways. At **Simba Craftware** found in the Midtown Global Market, the pieces are authentic African items made by African artists. Tamara Richard, a Manager at Simba Craftware, says leaves made in Ghana from recycled glass are a great conversation starter for the front door. As the first impression guests have of your home, the front door is definitely a place to go bold with the décor.

Richard also recommends the vibrant colors of African baskets as a great option to be used as a centerpiece with local fruit or with any other arrangement in the home. In addition to home decor, Richard has also seen many of these baskets filled with items found throughout the Midtown Global Market to create amazing gifts.

A wicker basket from Kenya filled with fruit, for example, or a Ghana-produced basket filled with salsas. As a final gift idea, Richard recommends filling a basket with pistachio shortbread, a cookbook, honey, and a candle. She says, "After the gift is given, there is a built in décor item!"

Simba Craftware
920 E Lake St, Minneapolis
www.simbacraftware.com



MACY'S

Much of the focus this year is on casual entertaining for the holidays, says Steven Bibeau, the Visual Manager at **Macy's** Downtown Minneapolis. "You don't need to spend hours getting the house ready and planning for guests. By using what you have on hand and adding festive touches, you can put together some great decorations to wow your guests."

According to Bibeau, it's important to have a game plan: decide when to decorate. "Errands and cooking need to be complete so you aren't running around the day of a dinner party trying to do everything," he says. The easiest way to create a festive mood is with lots of candles, but Bibeau warns that they should never be scented. Instead, try simmering some cider or mulled wine.

In terms of Christmas trees, the options are always endless. But Bibeau says when lighting Christmas trees, you can't have enough lights! "Even pre-lit trees need more," he says. "Add in pearl lights or star-shaped specialty strings for more sparkle. Always wrap lights around branches to hide the cords." He goes further to say that if you like decorating with a themed tree, considered a smaller table-top tree elsewhere. Use it to showcase your personal, specialty and heirloom ornaments. And, in a cost-conscious home, if tastes change, don't throw out old ornaments. Save them to use for a centerpiece or use as hangtags on presents and packages.

Under the tree is just as important to the look of the season. Bibeau suggests choosing two to three coordinating papers for gift wrapping. Tie them with a simple matching ribbon for instant elegance. What about those without enough space for a full tree? Bibeau's thought of that, too: look into tree alternatives. For example, a clear vessel filled with branches and hanging ornaments makes for a great entry table decoration.

Macy's
Downtown Minneapolis
700 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis
www.macys.com

Photo courtesy of Macy's



Photo by Hubert Bonnet

CB2

From the fashion runways into the holidays, metallics and modern shapes are an excellent way to add that little something extra. Rachel Horntvedt, **CB2**'s Assistant to the Visual Merchant, says the geometric shapes tie in nicely with traditional ball ornaments. While the shapes are very modern, the colors hark back to tradition. "It's kind of giving that little pop," Horntvedt says. "Because they're done in the metals, they are still akin to the older shapes and colors so it's just bringing an unexpected touch. The same goes for what we're calling our ribbon drop ornaments: they have a traditional shape, but it's done in thin sheets of copper and metal."

The ease of incorporating new elements into the home all depends on what you're working with to begin with. The pieces found at CB2 are following the trend of adding modern and unexpected touches to the holiday décor. Horntvedt says that five geometric ornaments, for example, randomly placed throughout the tree will add dimension and an unexpected twist. "Our pieces are all about adding in that little bit of modern or whimsy in with the traditional," she says. ■

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www.cb2.com

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HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING

OUT WITH THE SCARY, IN WITH THE MERRY

BY RYAN KROENING
PHOTOS BY REBECCA JEAN LAWRENCE PHOTOGRAPHY

Candles lit: check
Beverages chilling: check
Food ready to be served: check
Guest arrival: commence
Let's get this party started!

Whether you're a seasoned pro or this is your first soirée, holiday party planning should always keep one element at its core: FUN! In the stressful moments or last minute prep, keep that at the forefront of your mind, because planning and hosting a party should always be enjoyable.

The second most important aspect of any event is to keep it *you*. It can be a wonderful opportunity to step outside your routine; however, if your regularly occurring gatherings consist of sweat pants and whatever is in the fridge (which are also fun times!) I wouldn't recommend opting for the 10-course formal dinner route. You and your guests should feel comfortable and engaged, and your presence and decisions as host set that stage…err, table.

So what now? How to begin? Who to invite? Where to hold the actual party? When to have it?

Let's start at the very beginning (I hear it is a very good place to start)!

Why did you decide to host? If you answer this question first—and truthfully—it will assist to filter the proceeding questions and create a cohesive gathering. Do you want to showcase your new house? Are you excited to share an evening with 10 or 100 of your closest friends and family? Are you sick of your friend's boring parties and want to shake things up? How much time will you have to dedicate to preparation? Do you smile with glee thinking about planning an event, or feel sick to your stomach?

Again, keep fun in mind! If the entire process is feeling more like a burden, ask yourself why you're giving yourself a headache to throw a party no one is requiring you to host? If you were asked to host and it is now expected, loop in a few friends (or an event planner) to put your mind at ease.

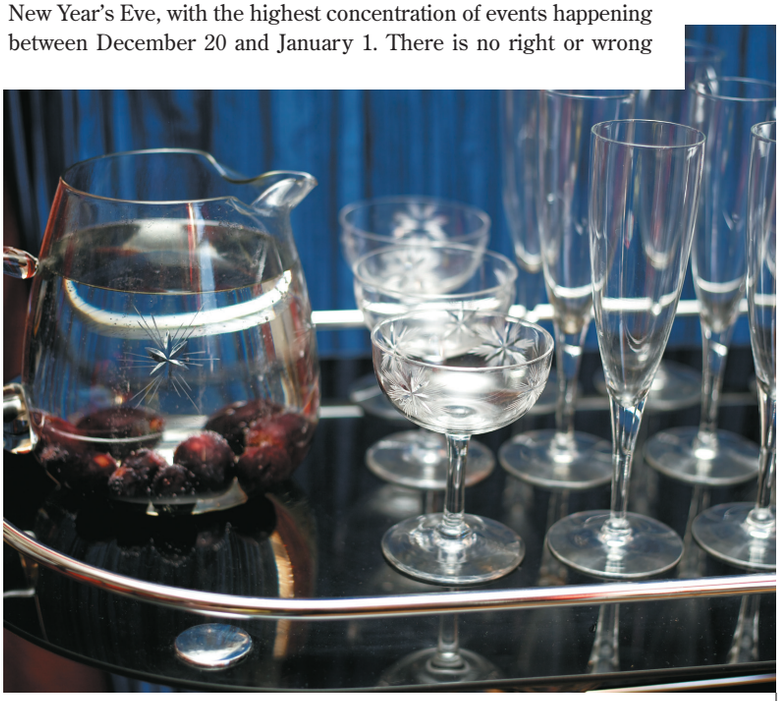
Hone in on the reasons inspiring you to create this event, and then set the tone.

What do you want to host? Are you desiring a gathering where folks dress to impress and sip lip-licking libations? Perhaps you want a large and energetic theme party with tasty treats and fun music? Or maybe you'd rather host an intimate dinner party for a handful of close friends? All of these options, and many more, are wonderful choices, and is where you can get really creative.

For a fresh start to the day, assemble a holiday brunch with a coffee and cocoa bar where people create their own signature concoction. Mornings (or early afternoons, let's be honest) aren't your jam? Then butter your biscuit and entertain an afternoon tea with scones, cookies, and chocolate treats. Eating in the evening is your desire? Collect a cadre by candlelight for dinner or hors d'oeuvres.

When and where? Now that you've figured out what you want to host, the when and where go hand-in-hand. The holiday party season typically lasts from mid-November through the first weekend after New Year's Eve, with the highest concentration of events happening between December 20 and January 1. There is no right or wrong





time to have a party, and consider weeknights as a viable alternative to the limited weekend days available.

If the *where* is your own home, your calendar is the only one that ultimately matters. Pick a date and time, and try to block off the 18 hours prior to and following for preparation, clean-up, and relaxation. If it will be a smaller group, throw out a few dates to a handful you'd want in attendance to try and accommodate their schedules.

The hosted venue is becoming more popular with holiday entertaining. Depending on the venue, it can require less energy with preparation and clean-up if staff are there to support those efforts. Whether private dining room, reserved party room in a condo or apartment building, or full-scale dance hall, approach these situations with at least two dates for flexibility. Start your search 3-4 months in advance (or even further), and then invite your guests 6–8 weeks in advance.



What do I serve? Your options are endless, and menu planning can be one of the biggest headaches. Don't feel like you must chain yourself to the stove for a month! No matter how delicious the treats, no one wants a host so exhausted from cooking that they can't enjoy themselves. Ask friends to contribute a dish or lend a hand; prepare ingredients and dishes ahead of time and re-heat before serving. Forgo a plated dinner and indulge in finger foods and dessert stations. If cooking isn't your thing at all, check out the offerings of your grocery store. Many offer platters and dishes you simply pick up from the deli, heat, and serve. Or contact a great local caterer such as Chowgirls Killer Catering for mouthwatering morsels to craft any creation you desire, with pick-up or full-service available.

If you're hosting a larger crowd, make a conscious effort to accommodate dietary restrictions and preferences. Providing an array of items that are vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, and nut-free makes all your guests feel welcome.

Libations can also run the gamut, from only wine and beer, signature cocktails that connect to the party, or a partially to fully stocked bar. Whatever the case, plan in advance. Get lots of ice, purchase a variety of mixers for the bar, chill the white wine the night before, and pre-mix the signature concoction as much as possible to serve from pitchers or carafes. Just like with sangria in the summer, freeze seasonal fruit to use in mixed drinks to add flavor and chill a drink without watering it down. In a similar manner to the food, have non-alcoholic beverage options in addition to the craft cocktail or pre-proofed punch such as flavored waters, sparkling cider, or specialty sodas.

Only have 12 wine glasses for your party of 50 or 8 plates for your dinner of 16? No problem! Head to an antique or second-hand store for unique finds, or budget-friendly Ikea or a dollar store to boost your collection. Want easy clean-up? Go green and get compostable cups, plates, and utensils at Litin Party Supply or other retailers.

How to decorate? Whether renting, repurposing, or purchasing, décor is *the* way to set the mood for an event. Hosting at home? Swap out your everyday throw pillows, blankets, or centerpieces for festive touches. Color is key, and don't be afraid to use LOTS of it! Allow yourself to move beyond typical red/green and blue/silver combinations, infusing pinks, yellows, purples, and even neon shades of all the colors into the scheme of things. I'm personally a big fan of adding a bit (or a lot) of sparkle and glitz, but you don't have to in order to make something cheery and bright. Candlelight can do that for you in simple glass votives dotted around the room to a pillar garden in the center of a table. One or two large statement pieces can go a long way in setting the visual tone for a space. A large vase with a floral arrangement to a beaded candelabra are all you need to do for an anchor, and use smaller accents throughout the space.

For rental venues, be sure to check with the coordinator regarding what they have on-site to use, and what they do and don't allow you to bring in. Nearly universal rules are: 1) no confetti or glitter; 2) no open-flame candles; and 3) nothing attached to walls. Take those into account, because if they are not followed, you can be fined or required to pay for actual damages or cleaning costs, which add up quickly. And no one wants that to be the lingering note of a fun night.

Who to invite? Directly correlated to *why* you're hosting is *who* you're inviting, and as with any special occasion, the invite list can be tricky. How many people do you have space, budget, and tolerance for in your home? What is the capacity of the venue? Are you sharing the planning, and thus the guest list, with a co-host?

Think about all the factors that will create your event, and who are those who will most appreciate it, and who are those you'd most like to celebrate with. For a small dinner, an invite can be especially difficult because of plus-one requests for already-limited seating. For larger events, it can still be hard to balance those who you want to spend time with versus those who may expect an invitation. One thing is for certain: don't let FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) direct your deed. Just because you pass them in the office every morning or wave at them across the bar doesn't entitle them to be invited to your social gathering. A general rule of thumb is that if you haven't interacted with someone, in person, in six months to a year, they probably shouldn't make the cut.

If you happen to be lucky enough to be on the receiving end of an invitation as lovely as this, on behalf of all that is good and kind in the world, actually RSVP! Use the Yes or Decline buttons and leave the Maybe alone.

Hosts and hostesses, I wish you the best of success in creating your holiday cheer! ■



Ryan Kroening is the owner of Events by Lady K. The Lady K team specializes in providing tailored support for your event needs—from conferences and fundraisers to celebrations and dinner parties. To learn more, visit www.EventsByLadyK.com





WINTER GARDENING

DECORATING FOR THE HOLIDAYS

BY TOM KERBY AND THE TEAM AT PHILLIPS GARDEN
PHOTOS COURTESY OF PHILLIPS GARDEN

It may be November, but the gardening season is not quite over. Keep your place looking beautiful during nature's downtime by decorating your planters, window boxes, front stoop pots, or just about anything you can stick a spruce tip in, to keep your spirits up through the holidays right 'til tulip time. Here are some tips to get you inspired.

What's your style? Choose a theme that expresses your style and helps you decide which materials to use. Are you modern or traditional, understated or bold? Use natural greens, dogwood sticks, pine cones, and berries for a traditional look. Kick it up for a modern theme using strong architectural elements, bold colors, large masses of a single elements, or unexpected materials and ornamentations. Another approach is to coordinate your pots with other holiday décor such as wreaths and garlands, inside and out. Or play off the color of your house. Red twig dogwood or birch logs look great against a dark house while dark alder branches stand out against a lighter background. The bluish tint of spruce or eucalyptus coordinates well with grey trim or accents.

Pick a pot. Whatever containers you used during the warmer months are probably just fine for winter decorating, but, honestly, if those pots have bold gold sunflowers painted on them, they may not be the thing. If you are purchasing new, select glazed ceramic, iron stone, or metal containers. The same process that creates a pothole just might bust up your terra cotta planter. Also, size does matter. Though you want your pot to be an appropriate size to fit the site, a larger pot will have more of an impact, and it's less likely to blow over in the wind.

Get thee to a garden center. We suggest keeping it real when it comes to the basic building blocks. Natural materials look good, smell great, and are, well, naturally beautiful. Many of these items, like spruce tips, pine boughs, sticks, cones, and berries, can be

CONTINUED ON PAGE 56



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picked up at a garden center or nursery. Specialty nurseries will carry more unique items such as dried pomegranates, magnolia leaves, lotus pods, eucalyptus branches, or grevillea leaves. If you're really wild, try gleaning things from your own property, such as dogwood sticks, crabapple branches, rosehips, mosses, and hydrangea flowers. And don't forget the goodies. Head to your favorite craft, home improvement, or hardware store for ribbons, ornaments, balls, and lights. These are the things that can add your personal touch and make your creations special.

Now put that pot together. Regular potting soil or sand work great as a base. If your pot is frozen, bring it into a heated garage or other indoor space (watch out for leaks!) to thaw it out. As for a traditional design, consider starting with a base of spruce tips, arranged either vertically or splayed out, or pine. A strong vertical element, using vibrant sticks, branches, and birch logs, adds some boldness and movement. Fill in around the base with cascading white or red pine, eucalyptus bunches, or incense cedar. Add complementary elements, such as winterberry, rosehips, pods, and cones, either at the base or throughout the design (like decorating a tree!). Larger groupings of these accents have more of an impact than little bits placed here and there. To polish it all off, add holiday-themed ribbons, ornaments, and other flourishes.

A more modern approach might not use greens at all with a dramatic base of dogwood sticks, flame or fantail willow, moss, pine cones, or magnolia leaves. Cut sticks to the same height for a very bold look. A large mass of a single element in a pot might be all it takes to express yourself. Group several of these pots of different shapes and sizes together for a unique and modern design.

Whether you're going for a traditional or more eclectic look, we suggest keeping it simple. We like larger clumps of a few elements repeated throughout, which makes a bigger impact and really lets each shine. Pick 3-5 things that look great together and repeat them through your design. Your pots will look polished and well thought-out rather than haphazard and scattered.

Now that you've got some ideas, here are a few tips for making your stuff stick and look fabulous right through the winter.

Sturdy and strong. Keep in mind that your creations are meant to last for the duration of the season, out in the elements, so they have to stand up to rain, sleet, snow, and stiff winds. Light and fluffy items just aren't going to make it for the long haul. Consider limiting the wimpier elements to the holiday season.

Plant 'em deep. Speaking of standing up, the deeper you can shove a spruce tip or dogwood stick into a pot, the sturdier and more stable it will be.

Put a stick on it. Or wire it down. Winter winds will send that oh so carefully placed ornament or ribbon right into your neighbor's yard, so wire it to a stick or a stake and plant it deep (see above). Alternatively, you can wire it directly onto something that is already firmly planted. Give it a tug. If it's loose, lock it down.

Christmas in March. Do you want to be that person on your block who is still wishing everyone "Happy Holidays" when the crocuses are pushing up through the snow? No, you do not. Make your base design look good on its own. Make the holiday portion of your pots (ornaments, ribbons, Santa figurines) easily removable so you can update your décor with the changing seasons (hopefully by Valentine's Day!).

Light up your life. Don't underestimate the warming welcome after a dreary commute home of a glowing, glittering pot o' greens. If you choose to light your pots, we suggest white traditional strand lights, preferably with brown wire. If you go with LEDs, use warm white for a subtler glow. But, hey, if your style is all about color, go for it! Wrap the lights around the base materials before adding accents to better hide the wires. Consider using a timer set to turn on at dusk and stay on for a specified time.

Happy hour. When all is said and done, and your pots, window boxes, and planters (or what have you) are all in place, lit up, and looking gorgeous, give them a good drink of water. It settles the soil and secures everything when the pot freezes.

In the end, it's all about bringing out your creativity and expressing your personal style. Make something that you will enjoy and that welcomes you, your family, and your friends to your home. Most of all, have fun. Spring is not right around the corner. ■

Tom Kerby has been working at Phillips Garden for the past five years as a Landscape Architect/Project Manager. He has been a registered Landscape Architect for over 20 years, and has collaborated with architectural/engineering firms on projects across the country. He is crazy passionate about creating and building meaningful, beautiful spaces as part of the team at Phillips Garden (www.phillipsgarden.com).



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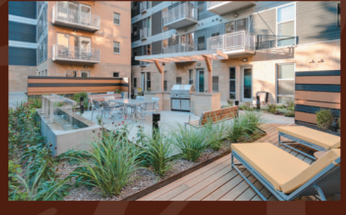
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SKIRTING THE ISSUES | BY ELLEN KRUG

TGDOR

In a week—on November 20—it will be Transgender Day of Remembrance, the annual day to honor trans people who've been killed because of their gender identity.

I'll be in Kansas City on November 20 to speak at a large international law firm and then to law students and the local bar association. Certainly, I'll talk about it being TGDOR to highlight the marginalization of trans people. No doubt, I'll point out that trans people have no legal protections in either Missouri or Kansas (although Kansas City proper outlaws trans discrimination) and how that impacts a trans person on everything from renting an apartment to finding a therapist or doctor.

Yet, I will not do something which traditionally occurs on TGDOR: I won't read the names of this year's victims nor will I list how each trans person died. It's not that I don't want to honor murder victims—after all, they are my people—or that I don't care. As a masculine-voiced woman who happens to be transgender, I'm very much aware of how the wrong person in the wrong situation could cause me great, even fatal, harm. I feel a deep kinship to all trans people (as well as to everyone else GLBT) who suffer violence simply because they're brave enough to live authentically.

Still, my focus will be on a different kind of violence that afflicts trans people—the violence which we do unto ourselves. What follows is the essence of the talk that I'll give in Kansas City.

Many know that of the letters in the GLBT alphabet, it's the Ts who have the highest incidence of bad stuff; comparatively speaking, trans people are far more prone to depression, substance abuse, homelessness, and joblessness. Crucially, the Ts are way more likely to attempt suicide or be successful at it. In fact, a 2011 study revealed that trans people attempt suicide at a rate nearly forty times the national average.

Why is it that the Ts are more prone to the self-hatred and despair that feed suicide; why do we become so very lost; what is it about our collective condition that makes it much easier to pull a trigger, loop a rope, or swallow a bottle of pills?

While I'm not a social scientist or expert on suicidology, I'm a trans person who grew up in a black-and-white society that defines gender on the basis of one's birth anatomy. Indeed, in most places on this planet, it's heretical to say that gender is brain-based rather than dictated by what's between one's legs.

It's very difficult to go through life when your brain doesn't match your body. To make things even worse, many non-trans (called "cisgender") people simply can't wrap their arms (or hearts) around the idea that in order to survive, a trans person must move from man to woman or vice versa. Parents, siblings, spouses, children, co-workers, and best friends far too often erroneously believe that transitioning genders is a choice.

Loved ones sometimes believe they, too, can choose. Their choice is to shut out the trans person, as if love flows from a spigot that can be turned on and off at whim. Many trans people fear losing love above all else; the need to be loved often outweighs the need to love one's self.

However—and I will attest from personal experience—not loving one's self is far worse than losing the love of another person. There's really no choice there: survival, authenticity, and being complete aren't things to choose. Rather, they're basic life necessities, preserved only by valuing one's self as a human who deserves basic dignity.

Words can't fully describe the utter misery that comes from having to "choose" between love of self and the love of another. Because of that misery, we trans people tend to resort to a third option: ending the pain by our own hand. For some, that becomes the only logical answer regardless of how illogical suicide is.

Having explained all of this to my Kansas City audiences, I will offer an answer to self-hatred and an antidote to fearing love lost: compassion.

Wikipedia—the authority on just about everything that matters—defines compassion as "the emotion one feels in response to the suffering of others that motivates a desire to help."

Compassion comes in two varieties. One is the compassion that we feel for others; it's exemplified when cisgender people keep the love spigot flowing for a trans person. Compassion is understanding that gender isn't at all a choice, that true love is unconditional, and that we must take people as who they are, regardless of our black-and-white society.

The other variety of compassion?

Compassion for one's self and recognition that we suffer by trying to live up to the standards of someone else. As trans people, we have the right to walk this earth as our true selves. Yes, that takes courage and a darn lot of hard work, but the payoff to loving one's self is freedom.

As I write above, TGDOR is about honoring.

I seek to honor those who struggle to remain with us.

Love yourselves, my T friends. You are worth it. ■

Ellie Krug is the author of Getting to Ellen: A Memoir about Love, Honesty and Gender Change. *She welcomes your comments at ellenkrugwriter@gmail.com. Readers experiencing thoughts about self-harm are urged to contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or their local hospital emergency room.*



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DATELAND | BY JENNIFER PARELLO

Oboe! I'm In Love

Yesterday I met a gang of harbor seals; an ancient, braless woman with very long pink eyelashes; *and* a professional oboist. I know what you're thinking: "Oh, Jennifer, why do you have all the luck?"

Well, my friends, this is what happens when you spend two weeks in Provincetown, MA. Interesting things happen!

Let's start with the seals. We were kayaking in the bay when suddenly several slick black heads popped out of the water around us. Pop! Pop! Pop! Soon, we were surrounded by seals who either wanted to make friends with us or attack us. Frankly, I was fine with either option. It was their neighborhood and we were the invaders.

"They look like street toughs!" my girlfriend said. "Let's beat it." (I'm not sure when my girlfriend started speaking like a minor character from *West Side Story*, but I suspect it was yet another magical effect from rubbing up against Provincetown.)

Of course, I'm not the type of person to let a challenge from a posse of marine mammals go unmet. So, I countered their adorable menace with my best weapon: my terrible singing voice. I began singing Cole Porter's "Tale of the Oyster" thinking it would scare them away (the typical effect my voice has on other creatures), but instead they inched closer and bobbed rhythmically. They stayed with us all afternoon, serving as a pack of plump honor guard, occasionally barking in appreciation for my atonal vocal skills.

As if that wasn't charming enough, as we headed from the harbor into town we spotted one of my favorite oddballs—the aforementioned old dame with hot pink eyelashes and a bosom that hangs down to her ankles. This sight isn't as shocking as it would be in, say, Des Moines. Provincetown is an artist colony that's packed with freaks. America's very first freaks—the Pilgrims—landed here in 1620 before heading to Plymouth, and things haven't changed much. It's actually the straight, white tourists who are out of place here. They are bussed in for day trips and clutch each other in terror as they navigate Commercial Street, which is choked with drag queens, musicians, S & Mers, art goons, and the occasional monkey.

I've seen the old lady with the eyelashes on every visit for the past 24 years. She serves as a harbinger for a charmed vacation. As soon as I spy her scurrying across my path, I know something wonderful is about to happen. She's never spoken a word to me, yet always manages to conjure up enchantment for me on each trip.

And this year was no exception! Shortly after she materialized, I met the professional oboist. As regular readers of this column (are there any?) know, it's been my dream since childhood to meet an oboist. I don't know why. I don't even know what an oboe is. I think it's like a flute but longer.

Anyway, my girlfriend and I were sitting at a waterfront bar and an oboist walked in with a trumpet player. And, no, this isn't the start of a bad joke. This is real life in P-Town! These guys sat next to us, and after a few moments of pleasant small talk, one of them mentioned he plays the oboe in the New York Philharmonic. He said this so casually, as if he didn't realize that this was the most momentous moment of my life! I immediately began hyperventilating with delight.

"Is she OK?" the boys asked with deep concern.

"She's fine," said my girlfriend as she held a cool compress to my head.

If I was able to speak at that moment, I would have said: "I'm better than fine. I'm in Provincetown!" ■

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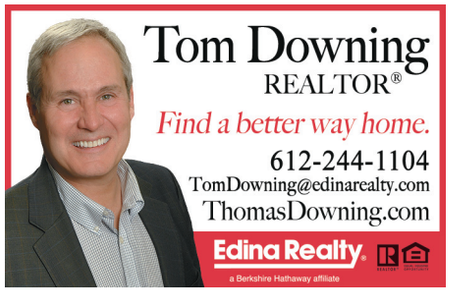








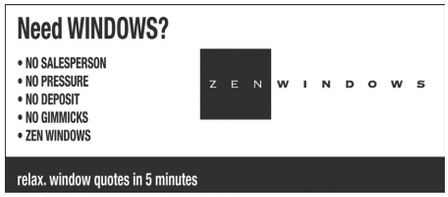
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THROUGH THESE EYES | BY JUSTIN JONES

On Romantic Masochists & Inactive Facebook Users

You didn't intend it to go as far as it did, unless, of course, it turned out well, in which case you planned it all along.

We risk our hearts when they're on the line. We risk big. We risk closing ourselves off and missing the opportunity to find *him,* or otherwise risk being "too available."

I risk both, and more. Add to the mix that I'm incredibly "picky" and the prognosis puts my chances at everlasting romance equal to the odds that we'll see a sequel to *The Passion of the Christ*.

My condition isn't uncommon. Those who suffer the collective call themselves "romantic." Those who consider it bullshit prefer "crazy."

Being a romantic means wishing for perfection but wanting volatility, hoping for happiness but thriving on heartbreak. "Lifelong" sounds great, but "Until" feels better. Deny it all you want.

Romantic writer Leopold von Sacher-Masoch aptly put it, "Your madness is nothing but a demonic, unsatisfied sensuality." (Guess whose name the word "Masochism" comes from…)

"He's so cute," says a friend. We're looking at a stranger's Facebook profile, and yes, the man on screen is cute: he has a scruffy, chiseled chin, wears baseball hats, and does manly things like off-roading and hunting.

My friend and I review his profile and are pleased to see that he isn't active on Facebook. Last post: two weeks ago, an impassioned two-sentence commentary on the Vikings and Packers. This is reassuring because active Facebook users are more annoying and conceited than inactive ones (I am an active Facebook user).

"Oh, look, we have a mutual friend," my friend says. "…you."

I don't know 90% of the "friends" I have on Facebook so this means nothing and my friend and I go about our day.

A month passes and the off-roading inactive Facebook user messages me. He says my posts about my tragic love life are funny and that he'd like to take me on a "real" date. This excites me and I think of him incessantly for two days, when finally I message him back, "Oh sorry, I've been really busy…" and accept his invitation.

Our date goes perfectly. He calls me afterward to say he had a great time and I'm already thinking of white picket fences.

The day after our date he texts me a funny picture and follows up with, "When will I see you again?"

We schedule Date Two.

Two days after our first date he texts me a funny picture and "good morning" and "good night."

As he does the next day.

And the next.

And the next.

And the next, and with increasing frequency.

I cancel our second date.

I debrief with friends and tell them about how clingy he was, how desperate his texts made him sound, and about how disappointed I was to lose such a potentially great guy. I end with that terribly ironic, compliment-fishing, whiny comment, "I'm going to be single for the rest of my life."

Not long after my encounter with the off-roading inactive Facebook user I go on a date with a lawyer, himself a masculine inactive Facebook user. Our date goes well and we schedule Date Two.

The lawyer doesn't text me incessantly, and at first this is reassuring. He isn't desperate. He isn't clingy. But, the more I think about it, I'm worried. *Why isn't he texting me? Maybe he's busy or maybe… maybe he didn't really like me, as in, really really like me. Maybe I did something wrong.* Because he's an inactive Facebook user I can't know whether or not he's busy, and I dream up awful scenarios of my having done something embarrassing during our first date, or that maybe he's heard a rumor about me. There's something wrong, right?

With the lawyer not reaching out, I want to text him myself, and the desire to do so grows uncontrollable. I want him to want me, and, ever the peril of the narcissistic romantic, I want him to *tell* me. Thankfully, I don't succumb to my madness.

Our second date goes well, but in the time since our first date, I've become so engrossed in the idea of unrequited infatuation that I've built him into an impossibly perfect man. I've constructed in my head someone way out of my league—someone I could never have—to rationalize why he doesn't like me. Our second date, then, is a disappointment. He isn't perfect. He is who he was on our first date—the guy I wanted only when he was new, when there was no expectation of him wanting me back…

Maybe it's that we play both roles when our hearts are on the line, at times romantic, at times crazy, but always masochistic, forever wanting what we can't have. ■

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